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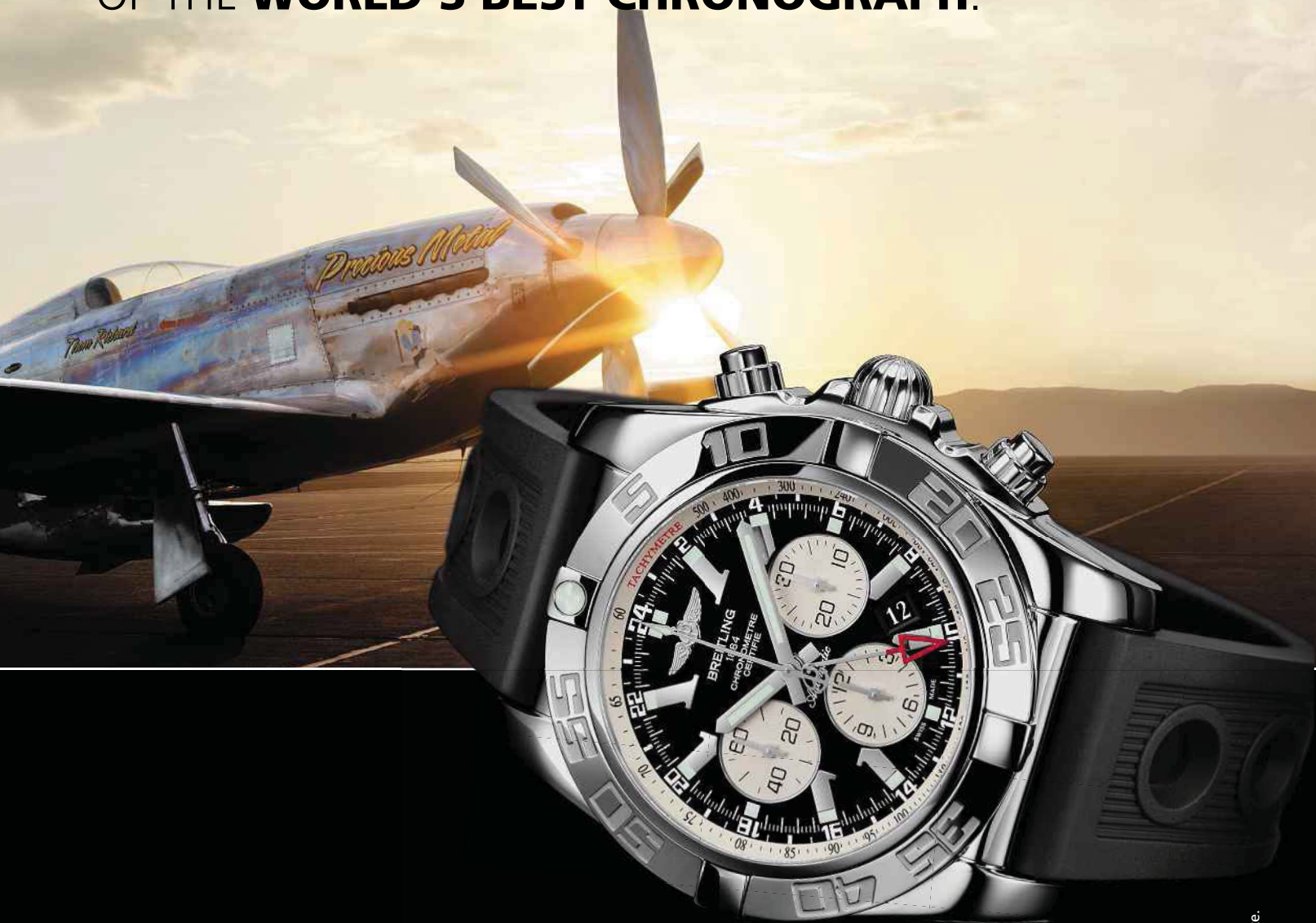
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While Europe's financial integrity continues to erode, the demand for extreme performance cars solidifies. More often than not, these carbon-bodied auto-jewels are tenderly packaged and shipped to the Middle and Far East, where, in some territories, extreme taxes are applied and your million-euro supercar triples in price. And despite this the demand remains strong.

I heard a great story from an insider at Bugatti recently, who told me that to this day he is being thanked for creating the market for the million-euro motor car. Who thanks him? Other manufacturers, some small and some large, who build (or soon will build) their own million-euro cars.

This begged an obvious question: with Bugatti famously making a loss on every Veyron sold, in hindsight was the price set too low? My contact thought long and hard about this. Then came a sublime example of a non-committal answer: 'We don't have any problems selling the Super Sport or the Vitesse, and they cost around 2million euros.' He then went on to tell me that on average customers will spend 200,000 euros on options or unique personalisation programmes...

As you will read in this issue of *evo*, the hypercar

ecosystem is spreading its tendrils farther and wider than ever – and with it comes extraordinarily exciting technology. When the Veyron was launched back in 2005 its tech seemed out of this world, but the next generation of supercars are so advanced they promise to bring the future forward ten years.

With this comes a concern – that the potential to access the essential thrill of driving will be impeded by layers of technology. On this matter I say to the manufacturers, spend more money getting it right, then sell it for more to recoup the investment.

That's a horribly simplistic statement, I know, but I get a very real sense from speaking to those who operate in the realm of hyperwealth that the three- or even four-million-euro car is a very real possibility. And soon.

Nick

Nick Trott Editor

This issue is dedicated to Will Gibney, a true petrolhead and evo reader who passed away recently. Our thoughts are with his friends and family.

THIS MONTH ON PLANET EVO

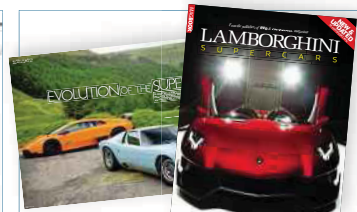


EVO TRACKDAYS

» Join the *evo* team on track at the Bedford Autodrome, either in the evening on July 13 or September 14, or for a slightly more competitive 'How Fast' day on August 14. For more info, visit www.evo.co.uk/trackdays

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» Updated for 2012, this second edition of the *Lamborghini Supercars MagBook* is jam-packed with stories from *evo* and our sister magazine *Octane*, on everything from Miura to Aventador. Available from WHSmith, Tesco and evo.co.uk

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HOW ALIVE ARE YOU?



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DEEP AND SAW-TOOTHED.
BLIP THE THROTTLE AND IT
CRACKLES LIKE A RACER'*

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It's been a long time coming, but Pagani's second all-new car – the twin-turbo, extensively aero-designed Huayra – has left the factory. Jethro Bovingdon drives it and finds out if it can escape the long shadow of the Zonda (and its many special editions)

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The Zonda hasn't been the only supercar to get the special edition treatment; the Vitesse is the latest Bugatti Veyron iteration: the power of the 1183bhp Super Sport combined with the Grand Sport's removeable roof. Nick Trott drives it

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AUDI RS4: A WELCOME RETURN TO FORM?

After a run of disappointing cars, can Audi's engineers rediscover the old RS magic?

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE WEDNESDAY, JULY 18



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Tyres t°: 98 °C

18,000 rpm

187 heartbeats/min

2.384L of lost sweat

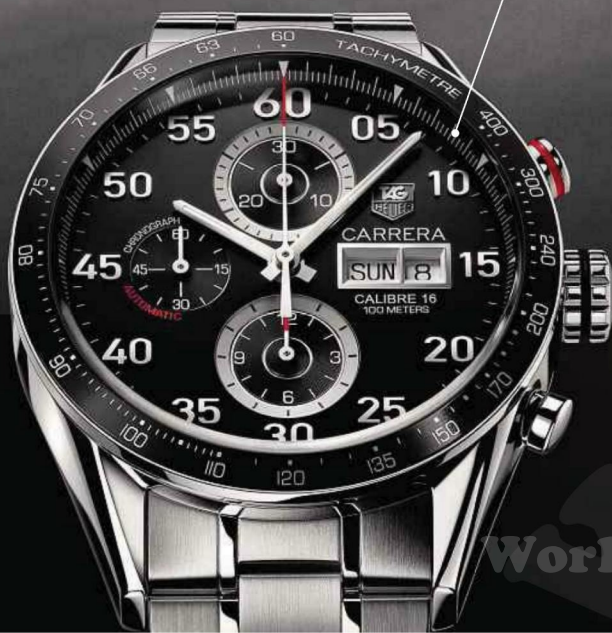
28,800 oscillations/hour

350 kph

Car's weight: 640 kg

Cockpit t°: 48 °C

Brakes t°: 936 °C

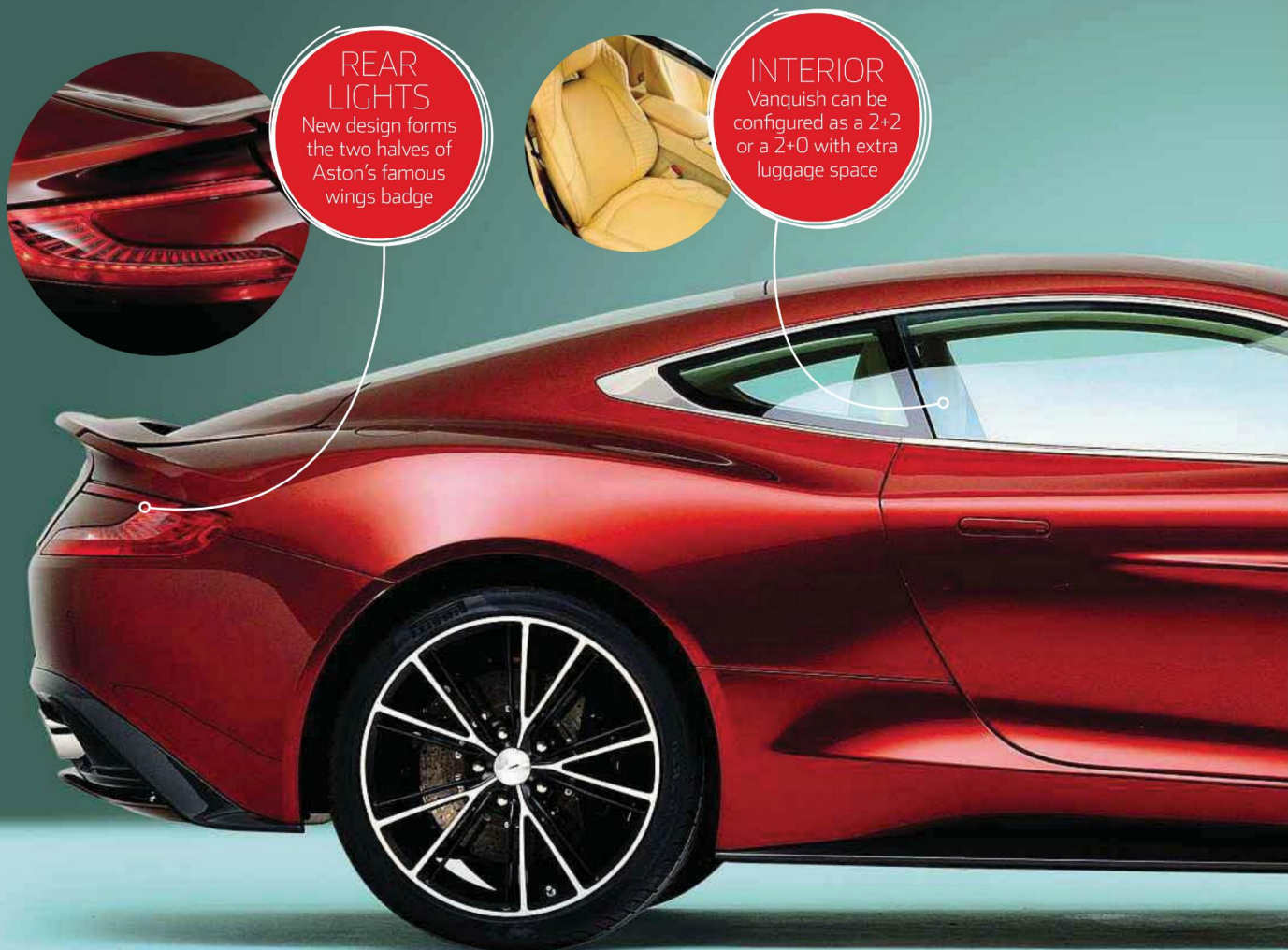


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REAR LIGHTS

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Aston's famous
wings badge

INTERIOR

Vanquish can be
configured as a 2+2
or a 2+0 with extra
luggage space

VANQUISH! ASTON'S

ASTON MARTIN REVIVES VANQUISH NAME FOR DBS REPLACEMENT. NEW FLAGSHIP BOASTS

When Aston Martin launched the original Vanquish back in 2001 it was the first stage of a radical reinvention that changed the face of the cars and the company. Now the Vanquish name has been revived for the car you see here, Aston's new series-production flagship and the replacement for the DBS.

New Vanquish comes at a time of need for Aston. The core V12 model range has faced increasing criticism for its shared platform, derivative design and broadly similar performance. This, then, is Aston's retort: a new 'super GT' that – although it's built on

the same platform – is lighter, faster, more powerful, more efficient and more spacious than the car it replaces.

It's more striking too, thanks to styling heavily influenced by the One-77 supercar. It's not a complete departure from previous Gaydon-era models, but it's a more aggressive, muscular and distinctive shape, with eye-catching features such as the extended side-strakes, sharply sculpted front splitter and rear wing, and new light clusters.

The all-new interior is more spacious – particularly in terms of knee, elbow and shoulder room – and features pioneering

switchgear that employs phone-style touchscreen switches with 'haptic' feedback through the smooth glass surface. The phone, Garmin satnav and B&O hi-fi systems are controlled through an integrated system operated via one LCD screen. Lavish upholstery includes quilted leather, and the Vanquish will be available in 2+2 or 2+0 configurations.

The new bodywork is entirely carbonfibre, which can be seen in the unpainted splitter and rear diffuser. Carbon is also used in the VH platform for the first time, forming the entire structure aft of the rear bulkhead. Now in its fourth generation, the aluminium structure

ALPINE TO RETURN?

Racecar concept hints at possible revival for Renault sub-brand **P18**



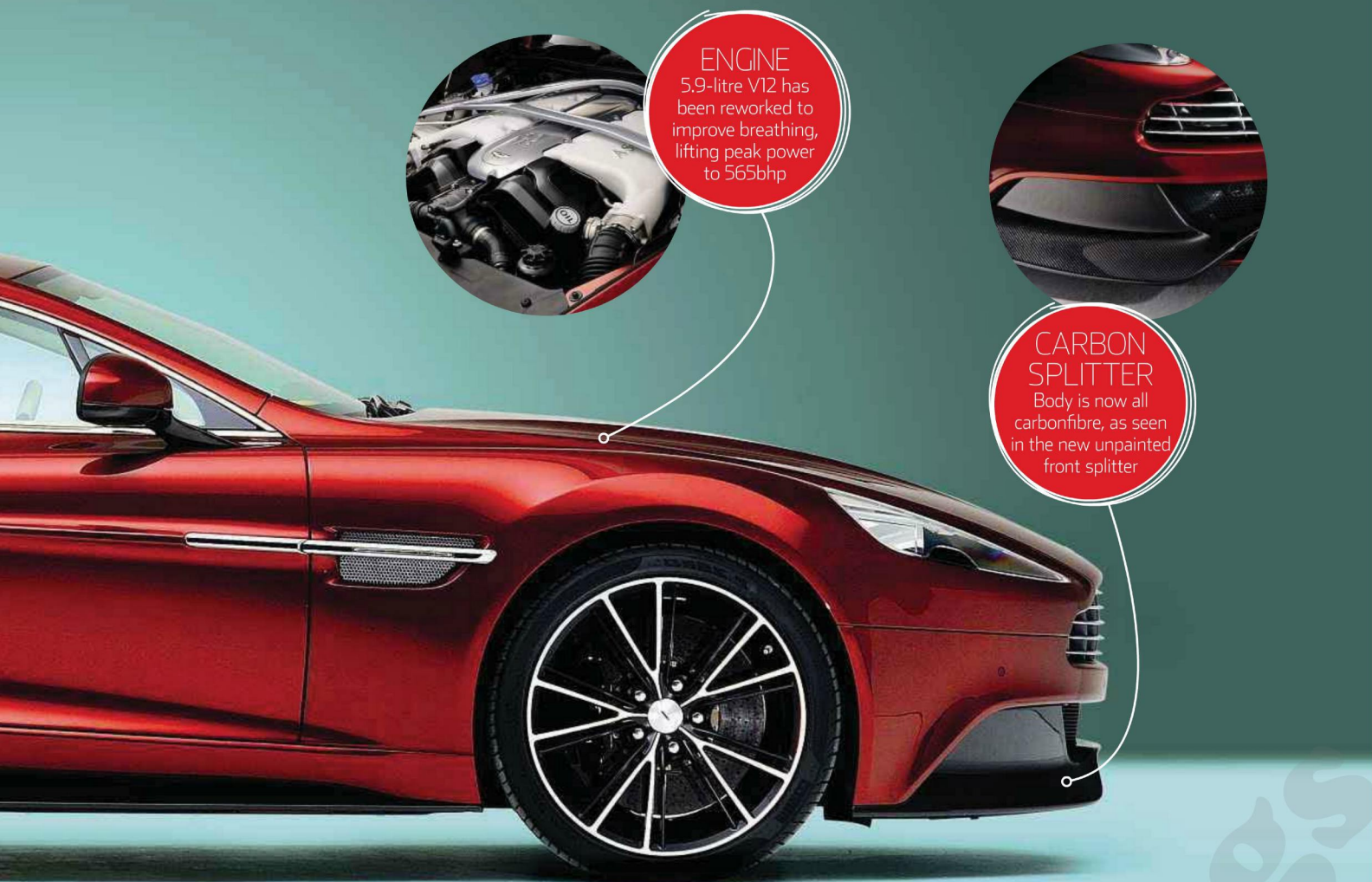
EARTHQUAKE AFTERMATH

How recent quakes have affected Italy's big supercar makers **P22**



NEW MINI GP MONSTERS RING

Second-gen hardcore JCW shows its intent with super-fast lap time **P23**



ENGINE

5.9-litre V12 has been reworked to improve breathing, lifting peak power to 565bhp

CARBON SPLITTER

Body is now all carbonfibre, as seen in the new unpainted front splitter

FLAGSHIP RETURNS

ALL-CARBON BODY, WEIGHT REDUCTIONS, UPRATED 565BHP V12 AND LIKELY £190K PRICE TAG

also incorporates new adhesives and bonding methods. This contributes to a 30 per cent increase in torsional stiffness over the DBS and more effective isolation from road noise.

Weight has been trimmed in a number of areas. The engine is 10kg lighter; the torque tube that connects the V12 and rear transaxle has shed 8kg. The exhaust system has dropped a further 10kg and there have been many other significant reductions in mass around the car. No official weight has been announced, but expect the Vanquish to be 70-80kg lighter than the DBS.

The powertrain – which sits 19mm lower in



Left: reborn Vanquish ushers in a sharper, more muscular new look for Aston Martin. Under the all-carbon bodywork, the VH platform now also incorporates carbonfibre for the first time

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'ASTON IS SIDE-STEPPING A FIGHT WITH FERRARI IT CAN'T WIN'

the chassis, reducing the centre of gravity by 10mm – has also received a series of upgrades. Improvements to the 5.9-litre V12 engine have centred on its breathing, with enlarged throttle bodies, a reshaped inlet manifold, dual variable valve timing, fully machined combustion chambers, valved airboxes and a lighter, uprated fuel pump all contributing to boosted power and torque figures of 565bhp at 6750rpm and 457lb ft at 5500rpm, up from 510bhp and 420lb ft for the DBS.

While those numbers pale against the Ferrari F12's breathtaking stats, as with the spiky 599 and more mellow DBS it's the way the Vanquish will deliver its performance that will define the driving experience. With Ferrari chasing ultra-extreme performance, by following a more accessible, less intimidating

recipe Aston is side-stepping a head-to-head fight it can't win by remaining true to its GT roots with a torque-rich mid-range for maximum in-gear performance.

Purists will doubtless be disappointed there will be no manual transmission option for the new Vanquish. Instead there is a quicker-witted development of the six-speed paddle-shift-operated torque-converter automatic. Now with a choice of shift maps to suit your mood and the driving conditions, shift speeds have been reduced by 37 per cent in the most sporting mode. It also features Launch Control for optimised standing start acceleration.

There is a choice of suspension settings and a three-stage (normal, sport and track) DSC system, which also alters the weight and feel of the power steering. The ratio of the steering



Above: quilted leather and glossy black 'waterfall' centre console give unashamedly luxurious feel. No performance figures yet, but reckon on sub-4.0sec to 60 and nudging 200mph

has been reduced to increase the sense of agility and response. The brakes are latest-gen carbon-ceramic discs, which offer greater outright stopping power as well as reduced 'brushing' noise when the brakes are applied.

We'll discover whether all these changes meld into a great new flagship later this year. Pricing is expected to be in the region of £190,000 and deliveries will commence in early 2013 – Aston Martin's centenary year.



INTERVIEW



MAREK REICHMAN
ASTON'S DESIGN
DIRECTOR ON THE
NEW VANQUISH

Q Is any of the design of this Vanquish drawn from the last one?

A We knew the new car would be called Vanquish as we began work on the design. We don't do retro, so the link between old and new Vanquish was always going to be the way both employed new technology, rather than try to make some visual link.

Q So where did design inspiration for the new Vanquish come from?

A The One-77 has had a big influence on the direction we've taken Vanquish. It has more sheer surfaces and hard lines to describe its form. The use of carbonfibre has enabled us to create curves with tighter radii, which has given us more freedom. That same material science has also enabled us to meet all pedestrian safety legislation without use of pyrotechnics, so we've been able to keep the line of the nose as low as possible. The use of carbonfibre to create very large one-piece panels allowed us to create that strong, sculptural form.

I also love the new tail treatment and the detailing

in the rear lights. The lenses are designed to mimic the Aston Martin 'wings' badge. Indeed, if you took the lenses off the car and joined them together they'd form a complete wing shape.

Q And we understand you've been busy in the cabin, too...

A Yes, we wanted to reduce clutter and distractions yet enhance the elegance and functionality. Our new glass switches mean we have kept the 'waterfall' centre console very clean and simple. There's also much more room, both for occupants and their luggage, so the Vanquish's GT credentials are better than ever.



BAHAR DISMISSED FROM LOTUS

LOTUS C.E.O. SHOWN THE DOOR AFTER AN ENQUIRY INTO HIS CONDUCT BY FIRM'S MALAYSIAN OWNERS. **MIKE DUFF** REPORTS

The formal announcement of Dany Bahar's dismissal as Lotus's CEO in early June didn't come as much of a surprise – he'd already been suspended for two weeks while allegations of misconduct were investigated by the sports car maker's new owners, DRB-Hicom. But confirmation that he wouldn't be returning to Hethel has raised some fresh questions about the company's future.

No official reason has been given for Bahar's suspension and subsequent sacking beyond 'a complaint made against him by the company's holding company', but rumours from within Hethel indicate they centred around his expenses, the use of private jets and an ongoing dispute over the cost of building work at the house the company had rented for him in Norfolk. Suggestions have also been made that the company gave cars away under Bahar's watch. Although the former CEO hadn't made any official statement on his dismissal as we went to press, he is believed to have appointed a law firm to represent him – indicating he may challenge the decision.

The more pertinent question for Group Lotus's 1200 employees is where Bahar's dismissal leaves the future of the company. Although DRB-Hicom has stated that it

remains committed to Lotus and has no plans to sell the firm, it's yet to announce whether it will continue with Bahar's ambitious strategy to completely revitalise the company's model line-up, which is meant to start with the new Esprit that we preview on page 88.

With sales of Lotus's existing model range sliding, the company will struggle to raise the cash to keep development going unless DRB-Hicom agrees to keep financing in place. *evo* has also learned that many of the senior managers brought to Lotus by Bahar as part of this planned renaissance are unsure about their futures – and one company insider has indicated that Bahar's ambitious motorsport programme is likely to be slashed back.

In the meantime, Aslam Farikullah – one of the team that DRB-Hicom sent to supervise the day-to-day running of Lotus following Bahar's suspension – has been promoted to become Chief Operating Officer. On the plus side, Lotus is sitting on a substantial order bank of cars – especially for overseas markets – and the new Exige S and Elise S (see page 108) show the company still knows how to build great cars. The future looks uncertain, and the company's many fans will be hoping that Bahar's dismissal marks the end of a crisis, rather than the beginning of a new one.



PORSCHE 911 CLUB COUPE

» The Porsche 911 Club Coupe commemorates the 60th anniversary of the first Porsche club, and uses the 3.8-litre Carrera S as its base. Costing £114,173, it gets 20in SportTechno wheels, a 'Powerkit' that lifts its output 30bhp to 424bhp, the PDK gearbox, a ducktail spoiler and Brewster Green paint. Just 13 will be made, with a lottery deciding who gets to buy one.



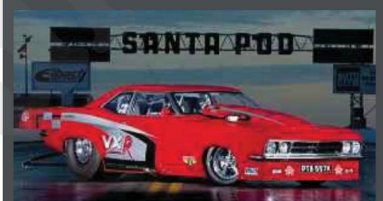
MERCEDES GL63 AMG

» There seems to be a new AMG model every week, and the latest is the biggest of the lot. Mercedes' 5-metre long, seven-seat GL SUV is the latest recipient of the twin-turbo 5.5-litre V8 engine, here serving up 549bhp and 561lb ft. Despite a 2.5-ton kerb weight, 0-62mph is ticked off in 4.9sec. Expect to pay around £90,000 when sales begin in November.



BMW M PERFORMANCE EDITIONS

» Good news if you want to pay over the odds for your M-car. BMW's M Performance Edition treatment is available on the M3 and M5, with 30 of each being made. There's a choice of red, white and blue 'Frozen' (aka matt) paint, with additional cosmetic tweaks, but performance is unchanged. The M3 costs £74,080, the M5 £95,140 – hikes of around 20 grand.



RED VICTOR VICTORIOUS

» Red Victor 3 – a 3000bhp Vauxhall Victor – has reclaimed its crown as the world's fastest road-legal drag car with a mind-blowingly fast quarter-mile time of 6.59 seconds at 220mph. The record was set at Santa Pod by the car's owner, Andy Frost. You can read the story behind his bonkers car in issue 167 of *evo*.

RENAULT BACK ON THE ALPINE TRAIL

MID-ENGINE RACER CONCEPT HINTS AT BRAND RESURRECTION. MIKE DUFF HAS THE DETAILS



You've got to give Renault credit for the possession of some major corporate balls. The company could have chosen to introduce the Alpine A110-50 in the normal arena of an air-conditioned motor show hall, or even via a slow trundle around a test track. Instead it brought its super-stylish motorsport concept to the Monaco Grand Prix and, after the Friday F1 practice session, Renault boss Carlos Tavares blasted it around the unforgiving street circuit with an impressive degree of commitment considering the number of lenses focused on him and waiting for something to go expensively wrong. It didn't.

Renault needs some good news. The company's been having a tough time lately,

with sales slumping across Europe and the UK model line-up having been slashed back to basics. And although the A110-50 concept is, officially, just a 50th birthday celebration of the A110 Berlinetta, it's also a broad hint that – once again – Renault is giving some serious consideration to resurrecting its famous sub-brand.

The Alpine is clearly related to another Renault one-off – the DeZir concept car that was shown at the 2010 Paris show, with the company's head of concept car design, Axel Breun, confirming that an Alpine version was always part of the plan.

But while the DeZir was a pure show concept, powered by a mid-mounted electric motor, the Alpine A110-50 is definitely a driver, being built on the same mid-engined

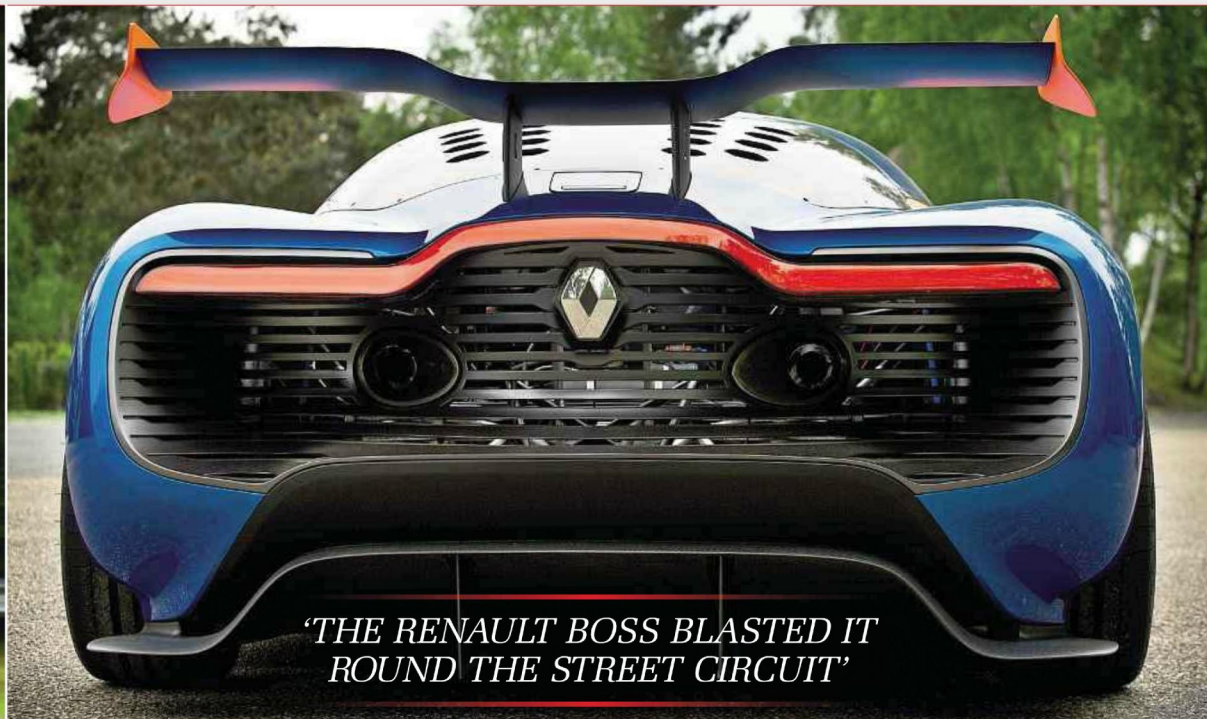
platform as the mad Mégane Trophy racer of a couple of years ago and sharing all of its major components.

That means a naturally aspirated 3.5-litre V6 tucked under the rear cover (a Renault-Nissan unit closely related to the engine in the Nissan 350Z) and here tuned to deliver a claimed 394bhp (up from the racer's 355bhp). Drive is supplied to the rear wheels via a six-speed sequential gearbox.

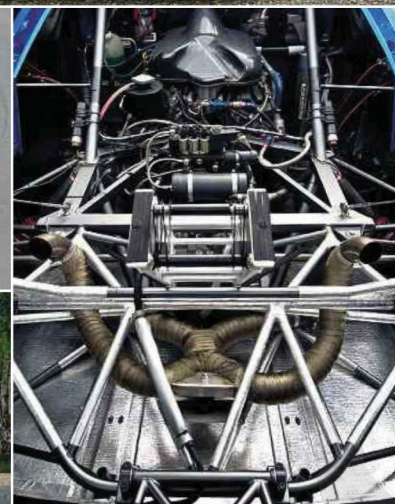
'We wanted to put the car in today's world – not create a piece of retro design,' says Axel Breun in an exclusive interview with *evo*. 'I think the Alpine approach is one that's very up-to-date and modern now – it was always about making intelligent cars, lightweight cars that used the latest materials.'

Visually, the 110-50 is riffing on plenty of

Above: A110-50 is clearly at home on a circuit, being built on the same mid-engined platform as the Mégane Trophy racer. Cockpit (above right) is pure race-car, as is the spaceframe chassis, into which nestles the 394bhp naturally aspirated 3.5-litre V6



*'THE RENAULT BOSS BLASTED IT
ROUND THE STREET CIRCUIT'*



Alpine's design themes, complete with a taut, low stance, 'Alpine Blue' paintwork and – a particularly nice touch – LED headlamps that give the characteristic yellow illumination of Alpine's classic rally cars: 'a technical but nostalgic interpretation', as the company puts it. The tubular chassis of the Mégane Trophy racer has been selectively reinforced, while the concept's roll-cage is lower as it has a shorter cabin.

Of course, Alpine's models were always rear-wheel drive and had their engines mounted behind the driver – something that Breun confirms is still regarded as being a vital part of the brand's DNA: 'In terms of pure performance, today's Mégane RS is very fast – you could say that you don't need a mid-engined car in terms of pure

speed. But I think that in terms of driving sensation it's something very special, and the Mégane Trophy chassis gave us the perfect opportunity to create a modern interpretation.'

It's been 17 years since the last Alpine-badged car was produced at Renault's Dieppe factory, and although the plant is still going strong as the base for the successful Renaultsport division, previous plans to resurrect the Alpine name have never come to fruition – although one Renault insider confirms 'there's almost always one on the go'. Will it be different this time?

Well, the A110-50 itself would form the basis for a racer like the Mégane Trophy it's based on. 'In terms of motorsport we are in Formula 1 and we have the World Series;

we have a whole range of racing cars,' says Breun. 'Will this car be produced in small numbers? I don't know at this moment – personally I think it would be great to see it running in the World Series, but we'll have to wait and see.'

Any plans to launch Alpine road cars are considerably further off – although Renault is clearly giving some serious consideration to dusting off the famous brand. 'I definitely think that Alpine could be relevant in the modern world,' says Breun, 'I don't believe that cars have to have 500bhp. Very often when I read a test I can tell that the power is impressive but there's something lacking – and I think that's something to do with the weight. We have to think about that, and in the DNA of Alpine I think you see a solution.'

ALPINE STARS



A110 (1961-77)
» Alpine's brand-defining model was a lightweight road and rally car that used various 4-cyl rear-mounted Renault engines.



A310 (1971-84)
» Edgy successor to the A110 had V6 power and 137mph potential. The DeLorean DMC-12 later shared the same powertrain.



GTA/A610 (1986-95)
» Final iteration of Alpine's sports car kept with glassfibre bodywork and V6 power but now turbocharged. A610 had 276bhp – good for 180mph.



Renault Sport Spider (1995-97)
» Not an Alpine, but the Spider was produced at the same Dieppe plant, with power from the Clio Williams' 2-litre engine.



Clio V6 (2003-05)
» In the 2000s the former Alpine factory switched to Renaultsport activities, with the second-generation of the Clio V6 being assembled there.

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QUAKE HITS MODENA REGION

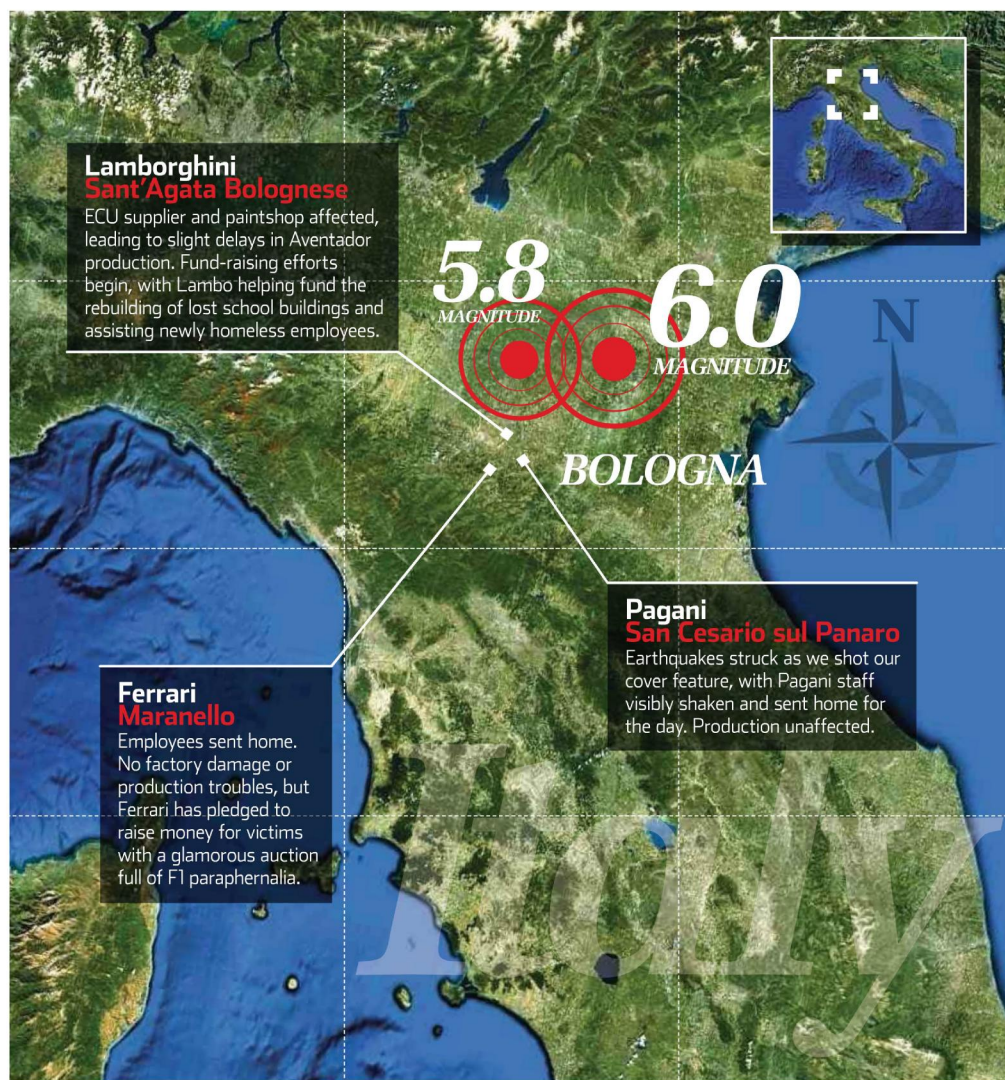
A SERIES OF POWERFUL EARTHQUAKES IN NORTHERN ITALY SEES KEY SUPERCAR FACTORIES EVACUATED AND SOME SUPPLIERS AFFECTED. **STEPHEN DOBIE** REPORTS ON THE AFTERMATH

May saw northern Italy struck by several severe earthquakes, measuring up to 6.0 on the Richter scale. As we went to press, 24 people had died and around 15,000 had been made homeless. Striking near Bologna in the prosperous Emilia Romagna region, the quakes also affected Italian industry, including a number of performance car manufacturers in the Modena area.

Ferrari, Lamborghini, Maserati, Ducati and Pagani sent workforces home immediately after the most devastating earthquake (despite its smaller 5.8 magnitude), which struck at 9.03am on May 29 and resulted in 17 deaths in the areas affected.

No structural damage was reported to any of their factories, and production was back to normal the following day. Some suppliers have been affected, however, most notably a company that makes ECUs for Pagani and Lamborghini, as well as one of the latter's paintshops. There has been no impact on Huayra or Zonda production, but Aventador assembly has slowed while component manufacture is relocated, and deliveries could be delayed. The Gallardo is unaffected.

Lamborghini has assisted employees made homeless as well as helping with the rebuilding of damaged school laboratories as part of a pledge to support the region's education system. Ferrari has set up an online auction, with all proceeds going to families badly affected by the earthquakes. Lots include a Formula 1 V8 engine, a 599XX Evo supercar (with a 1.3million euro starting bid) and an extremely rare piece – a Giancarlo Fisichella Ferrari race suit.



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MAC AND MERC BOOSTED

POWER INCREASES ANNOUNCED FOR MP4-12C AND SLS

Mclaren and Mercedes have both announced upgrades for their junior supercars, including power increases.

The 2013-spec MP4-12C sees its output boosted by 24bhp to 616bhp, with existing cars getting the same upgrade as a software update. Together with some gearbox tweaks, it's enough to trim 0.1sec from the official

0-124mph time – which falls to 8.8sec. Well, every little helps. Other tweaks include more engine noise in the cabin and proper release buttons for the upward-hinging doors in place of the previous touch sensors, which often failed to work. Another useful option is a vehicle lift function to help clear speed-bumps. The basic price rises from £168,500 to £176,000.



FASTEST MINI STORMS RING

SECOND-GENERATION JOHN COOPER WORKS GP
OBLITERATES ORIGINAL'S NORDSCHLEIFE TIME

Mini has pulled the wraps off its fastest car yet. Although power and performance figures are yet to be released, the second-generation John Cooper Works GP has already posted an 8min 23sec Nordschleife lap time, 19sec quicker than the original

GP, and a mere 6sec off the pace of the Renaultsport Mégane R26.R, a former front-drive lap record holder.

The new GP continues in the same vein as its hardcore 2006 forebear, with its two-seat interior, four-spoke alloy wheels and grey and red colour scheme. It is notably more track-

biased than before, though, with fully adjustable, race-derived suspension (with completely new springs and dampers compared with a regular JCW), bespoke Kumho tyres and a focus on aerodynamics, with a sealed underbody and carbonfibre rear spoiler helping create genuine downforce. The body kit is borrowed from Mini's Challenge racing car.

The new car will use a tuned version of the 1.6-litre turbo four from current fast Minis, and the Ring time suggests it's likely to significantly trump the supercharged mk1 GP's 215bhp. Expect closer to 250bhp – and a price tag of around £30,000.

SPIDER SPUN FROM NEW MX-5

ALFA-BADGED ROADSTER TO BE BUILT ALONGSIDE NEXT MAZDA SOFT-TOP

Fiat is set to build an Alfa-badged roadster using the platform of the next-generation Mazda MX-5, the two companies having signed an agreement to develop both cars together. It's likely that the Alfa will be called the Spider and go into

production as early as 2015, a year after the MX-5 goes on sale. In a radical departure for the Italian brand, it's possible that the pair will be produced alongside each other at Mazda's Hiroshima plant in Japan.

Sharing the platform makes sense

for Fiat, which would otherwise have struggled to justify the development costs of creating its own rear-drive sports car. The new Spider will sit beneath the forthcoming mid-engined 4C in the brand's sports car hierarchy, probably with a sub-£20K price tag.

Meanwhile, Mercedes has revealed a 'GT' pack for the SLS coupe, with power increased by 20bhp (rising to 583bhp) and with the gearbox reprogrammed to deliver faster shifts. Together they're said to cut the 0-62mph time by a tenth of a second, dropping it to 3.7sec. The GT also gets revised suspension, which offers only the firmer 'Sport' and 'Sport Plus' settings and scraps the 'Comfort' mode of the standard SLS. Prices haven't been announced yet but the GT will be certain to carry a supplement over the standard SLS coupe.

SLS coupe (right) gets an extra 20bhp, faster gearbox shifts and sportier suspension with new GT pack



FERRARI RECALLS

» Ferrari has announced a recall affecting its V8-engined models, the 458 Italia and California. A small number of crankshafts were finished by a wrongly calibrated machine, which could lead to engine seizure, though no incidents have been reported. Only 206 cars worldwide are affected, including ten Californias and six 458s in the UK. Their owners will receive a letter from Ferrari.



BMW ZAGATO COUPE

» BMW used this year's Villa d'Este concours in Italy to unveil its Zagato Coupe concept. Based on the current Z4 roadster, but looking more than a little like the previous-generation Z4 Coupe in profile, it possesses a plethora of bold Zagato flourishes, including a double-bubble roof, glass bootlid and a 'Kamm Effect' tail. BMW has not commented on the possibility of a similar car entering production.



VW POLO R PREVIEWED

» Volkswagen has given a taste of a hot Polo R with this Polo WRC Street, shown at May's Worthersee tuning show in Austria. It uses a twin-charged (i.e. turbocharged and supercharged) 2.0-litre TSI engine with 217bhp, a healthy 39bhp more than the 1.4 TSI-equipped Polo GTI. The styling, as the name suggests, is inspired by the VW Polo World Rally Car.



CITROËN C6 AXED

» After poor sales, the Citroën C6 has been culled from the French firm's UK line-up. The 5-series rival – which launched in 2006 – has never set the sales chart on fire, and with the equally quirky DS5 now on sale, right-hand drive production has stopped. Fewer than 1000 C6s have been registered in its six years in Britain.



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John Barker

evo's editor-at-large assesses the latest car technologies



GERMAN FIRM LAUNCHES ADJUSTABLE SUSPENSION SYSTEM THAT ALLOWS YOU TO TWEAK THE DAMPING FOR ROAD AND TRACK VIA AN iPhone APP

Imagine arriving at a circuit in your road car and being able, via your smart phone, to set the dampers of your car to firmer trackday settings. And if it rains during the day, to set them to a softer set-up in a few moments. And then firm up the front slightly, or soften the rear a little, to tailor it to the track or conditions, all without leaving the driver's seat. That's the potential offered by a new system from German suspension manufacturer KW.

After-market adjustable dampers have been around for many years, but most of them require that you scabble around under the car, counting clicks. Not with this new system, which KW calls 'DCC ECU'. That stands for Dynamic Damping Control and Electronic Control Unit. It's the sort of system you might find on a car maker's option list, one with three pre-sets, here dubbed Comfort, Sport and Sport+. It's the addition of an optional W-Lan module that opens up a much greater range of set-up possibilities, simply, quickly and painlessly applied to your car via your Apple iPhone.

The basis of the system is a set of KW coil-overs combining stainless steel bodies with electronic valve adjustment, composite purple ride-height collars, and uprated yellow coil springs. On some manually adjusted KW coil-overs, bump and rebound are individually adjustable but on the DDC ECU system they adjust together. What the W-Lan module allows you to do is tailor the damping on each axle, between

zero and 100 per cent of the damping force available. The free app that you download from the iTunes App Store can also store up to five different set-ups and share them with friends via email.

The system is currently offered on a small range of models from BMW, Mercedes and VAG and, as you'd expect, is TÜV-approved. It costs between £2360 and £2520 for the DDC ECU kit, £359 to get iPhone control, plus fitting, which takes on average two to three days.

The UK importer of KW has equipped two sought-after cars, a BMW 1M and a Range Rover Evoque, with the full system. The installation of

'THE FREE APP CAN STORE UP TO FIVE DIFFERENT SET-UPS AND SHARE THEM WITH FRIENDS'

the hardware in both is very neat, the ECU and wi-fi receiver of the BMW tucked into the boot floor in a space that looks designed for the job. The 1M has a more purposeful stance, too, being lowered on firmer springs that are part of the package.

The standard 1M on its passive suspension isn't exactly soft, but there's an extra tautness to this car that you notice as soon as the wheels are rolling. As KW says, it is not selling to a broad range of potential owners, it's selling to enthusiasts and trackday goers. The firmness in the ride is matched to more directness in the steering and a sharpness to the

general handling that promises precise control.

The Comfort, Sport and Sport+ settings are selected via a tidy little aluminium button that fits snugly into the 12V socket in the ashtray. In Comfort it's lit blue, in Sport purple and in Sport+ red. Comfort is more than enough for British back-roads, the 1M feeling resilient, almost bouncy over surfaces that wouldn't much bother the standard car. It feels a lot crisper and more positive than the stock model on smoother asphalt, and there's a good feeling of connection once it's up on boost and the car is loaded in a turn. Where the standard car slips softly into oversteer and you ride out slides almost lazily, the KW car is much sharper. But watch for the bumps because even in Comfort it's a much snappier car when it breaks traction, requiring quick and accurate opposite lock.

Overall, it's probably a bit too firm for UK roads. Same goes for the Evoque, though the damping in Comfort feels like it lets the nose bob a little. Of course, this could be tuned out via the app, but what both cars show is that you need to nail the appropriate nominal setting to have a useful tuneable range. We'd like to test the system again with spring-rates better suited to British B-roads.

It's a great idea, though, adjusting damping via your iPhone, and offers a practical insight into a segment of chassis tuning. I reckon it won't be long before KW adds separately adjustable bump and rebound damping and that will offer even more permutations to budding chassis engineers and knowledgeable trackday goers.



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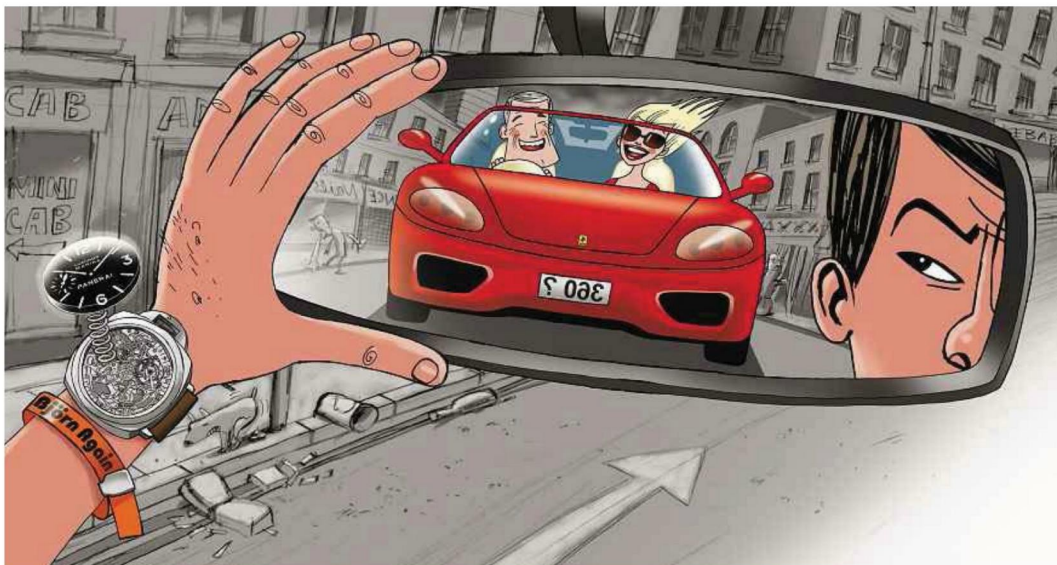
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Richard Porter

Top Gear TV's script editor wonders if it's OK to turn an MR2 into a 360 Spider



'THE TROUBLE WITH FERRARIS IS THEY'RE QUITE EXPENSIVE, WHICH IS PRESUMABLY WHY THIS MAN CHOSE TO BUY A FAKE'

He appeared in my mirrors from nowhere. Ferrari 360 Spider, rosso corsa, crema leather, roof down. If we'd been hammering up Mont Ventoux this might have been quite interesting. In fact, we were hacking through the grizzly bits of North London, which made it all the more amazing that the Ferrari's roof was down. Inside was a chap of a certain age – salt and pepper hair, stout jawline – and a lady companion. They appeared to be laughing. Maybe it was the nervous laughter you can only experience when you've got the top down on the Holloway Road and you know at any second you might be flobbered on. Maybe they were just enjoying being in the sun in a Ferrari.

At the next red light they drew alongside. I glanced across, noticed the gleaming cream leather, took in the thoughtfully provided cubby box on top of the dash, just above the cheap plastic vents with the round hazard warning lights button between them and... haaaaang on. I know that dashboard. That's not a Ferrari at all. It's a Toyota bloody MR2.

The lights went green and the pretend Ferrari pulled away with a small flurry of noise. A flat-plane-cranked V8 at low revs isn't that far away from the sound of a small four cylinder with a fart exhaust, but it was too late. The jigger was up. This bloke was faking it.

I'm rather torn by this. On the one hand, where's the harm? What he's driving is the equivalent of one of those note-perfect tribute bands and there's nothing wrong with those. I'll never see ABBA live, but I have watched Björn Again and they were rather enjoyable, although I seem to remember I was a bit drunk at the time. I'm unlikely to see David Bowie perform his early work on an acoustic guitar, but last year I watched a very talented mimic do just that and, if you squinted, it was almost like being in 1973. There's nothing wrong with this because it gives you a pleasant re-creation of something you might otherwise never see.

There is, however, no need to pleasantly re-create the Ferrari 360 Spider because there are still plenty around. Trouble is, they're quite expensive, which is presumably why the man I saw in North London chose to buy a fake.

You might say it's no different to buying a fake watch on holiday and I'm sure plenty of us have done that. I once picked up a hooky Panerai in Rome and was delighted to discover that it had an actual, proper mechanical mechanism rather than a quartz movement. As it turned out, the spring was so weak it stopped almost as soon as you took it off and required you to make a constant series of flamboyant left arm gestures if you wanted it to keep time. But that was okay, because it only cost 10 euros.

The fake 360 did not, I'm guessing, cost the equivalent of eight quid. I suspect it cost rather a lot more than that. Not full Ferrari money, of course, but by the time you've factored in the base car and the new panels and the re-trimmed interior I'm guessing the whole illusion wasn't cheap.

And I wouldn't mind except that I remember the mk3 MR2 being an extremely good little car. It felt light, it felt zingy, it felt slightly edgy. I enjoyed it enormously and at no point did I think that any of those qualities would be enormously enhanced by the addition of a much larger fibreglass body and some sodding great wheel spacers.

If I'd gone up to the Bowie impersonator and discovered he talked like the real Bowie and kept going on about being married to Iman, I'd have considered him delusional. If our North London friend didn't want people to think he was a high roller with a Ferrari, why had he gone to the trouble of buying Prancing Horse badges for the nose, tail and wheels?

I'd like to regard the pretend Spider as a harmless bit of fun and an enjoyably thorough deception but I can't. Instead of scrimping and saving to buy an actual Ferrari, what the owner has actually done is spent too much ruining an MR2. And I'm afraid that just makes him an idiot.

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Harry Metcalfe

evo's editorial director on the demise of the beautiful car. It's all the fault of the Chinese



'HOW WE SCOFFED WHEN THE X6 FIRST APPEARED. WHO ON EARTH WOULD BUY THIS MONSTROSITY? LOTS OF PEOPLE, IT TURNED OUT'

Car design is undergoing a revolution at the moment and I'm not sure I like where it's heading. As with just about everything to do with the car industry these days, it's all the fault of those pesky Chinese, who prefer their cars to have generous interior space and four doors rather than the sleek, coupe body styles favoured by European buyers.

Car design is always evolving, but occasionally there are new arrivals that spark a different design direction that others soon follow. Three recent examples of such landmark cars are the Mercedes CLS, BMW X6 and the Ferrari FF. All three bucked the trend when they first appeared but the crucial thing here is not only did they look different, they sold way better than their makers expected them to do (except the FF, which is doing less well than hoped, which we'll come to later).

The Mercedes CLS first appeared in 2004 and stood out because here was a four-door car that thought it was a coupe (something Jaguar should have been doing at the time). Suddenly, the traditional two-door coupe (with tricky access to the back seats) seemed very old-hat. Every car design office around the globe took note, especially when Mercedes found demand for its new baby went through the roof. It wasn't long before a number of CLS clones arrived – today they include cars like the new BMW 6-series Gran Coupe and the highly successful VW Passat CC.

Not to be outdone by Mercedes, the crayon boffins at BMW thought it might be fun to make a coupe out of the X5. Oh how we scoffed when the X6 first appeared in production form at the 2008 Detroit show. It seemed such a pointless car: the X5 did everything that anyone could possibly want from a family-sized sporting SUV, while the X6 simply took away interior space to leave rear seat passengers seriously compromised, together with a significantly reduced boot. Who on earth would buy this monstrosity? Lots of people,

as it turned out. The original sales target of 20,000 units was achieved within a year of launch, with total global sales today standing at well over 100,000 units (or five times what was initially expected).

When Ferrari gives up on its traditional 2+2 coupe, you know it's time to pay attention. The problem with the FF is that the company has regularly stated that it would never put a four-door model into production, so the FF could only have two doors (plus hatch). I reckon Ferrari missed a serious trick here. Porsche said it would never introduce a diesel model, yet diesel Panameras and Cayennes are its best-selling models in Europe. Had the FF had four doors, I'm sure it would have helped sales significantly because access to the FF's rear seats is still heavily compromised.

So where does all this leave the traditional 2+2 coupe? In trouble, basically. I recently interviewed Harald Wester (CEO of Maserati and Alfa) and asked him when we might see a GranTurismo replacement. It was obviously very low on his 'to-do' list. Wester is far more interested in getting the Kubang SUV concept and the two new four-door cars to market than replacing the ageing coupe, and it's a similar story over at Jaguar, whose XK has to struggle on for a few more years yet, even though sales of the standard versions are down to a trickle. What makes it even trickier for Jaguar is that because it's twinned with Land Rover it's harder to introduce the sporting SUV it would surely like to.

So after decades of 2+2 coupes traditionally being seen as the most stylish cars in a manufacturer's range, it seems as if they are on their way out, and I for one will mourn them. It's very hard to make a roomy four-door or sporting SUV truly 'beautiful'. Imposing and stylish yes, but can future cars like the Lamborghini Urus, Bentley EXP-9F and Maserati Kubang ever be described as beautiful? Not in my book, but let's hope there's a car designer out there who can prove me wrong. Nothing would please me more.



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Tiff Needell

The racer and presenter on the future direction of motorsport



'DO WE WANT RESULTS TO BE LARGELY DOWN TO THE DRIVER, OR DO WE WANT THE SPORT TO BE A PLAYGROUND FOR THE BOFFINS?'

Round about now, tens of thousands of Brits will be topping off their pyramids of empty beer bottles at the campsite and almost certainly cheering home yet another Audi victory at Le Mans. Whether it's one of the trusty R18 'Ultras' or the new hybrid 'e-tron', who knows – and, let's face it, who apart from the Audi PR department really cares?

Indeed, when it comes to headline-grabbing stories, much of Audi's thunder may well have been stolen by Nissan's DeltaWing project which, if it lasts any distance, will surely be down at the opposite end of the field. Rejected as a one-make option for the new IndyCar formula which began this year, this radical design was granted an additional 56th entry by the Le Mans organisers and set out to complete the 24 hours using half the power and half the fuel of its competitors while running at a similar pace.

The only problem is that the DeltaWing needs to run in a completely different envelope to the rest of the field. Its strengths are light weight and minimal drag, so it can be very fast in a straight line, but its weakness is lack of downforce and therefore limited cornering grip. If it went down the straights at 250mph but was slow round the corners it might be able to produce a respectable lap time – but the organisers have threatened to clip its wing and limit it to 200mph on safety grounds.

Which brings me to the point of this column, the ever-growing pressure on our sport to decide if we want racing series to demonstrate the best drivers – or the best designers. Do we want to see the sort of restrictions that we see in the American model, where it's largely down to the driver, and where the best man – or woman – wins? Or do we want the sport to be a playground for the boffins?

Our world governing body seems obsessed with the need for manufacturers to be directly involved in our sport, yet right now they are decidedly thin on the ground. Yes, there's

no doubt their large budgets help the circuit promoters pay their bills and Audi would probably withdraw from racing if the regulations somehow managed to allow them to be beaten by a Pescarolo Judd, but would the fans mind if the race result was less of a foregone conclusion?

So, seeing as we currently have just Audi, Mercedes and now Toyota of the mainstream manufacturers prepared to invest in the highest levels of motorsport in these difficult economic days, perhaps the time has come to reassess the direction in which the regulations are moving.

I still reckon the best era of F1 was the mid-'70s when Ferrari was the sole manufacturer competing against a field full of what Enzo called the *garagistas*, with a dozen or more teams sticking the brilliant Ford Cosworth DFV in the back of their chassis. An era when the likes of Lord Hesketh could build his own car, go racing and win! When success wasn't defined by where you aim your exhaust pipes.

Not that I want to deprive the boffins of their fun. My friend Lord Drayson, who is championing the electric cause, has a dream of a rule that simply permits you to take a given 'box' of energy, be it petrol, diesel, electricity, hydrogen or chip fat, and then do with it whatever you wish. This would be my 'manufacturers' formula for sportscars, and the Le Mans organisers could go back to their old 'Index of Performance' to decide the winner. But these cars would be slower than my 'drivers' formula at the head of the field, which would be pretty much as it is now but with the driver aids removed and only petrol for power!

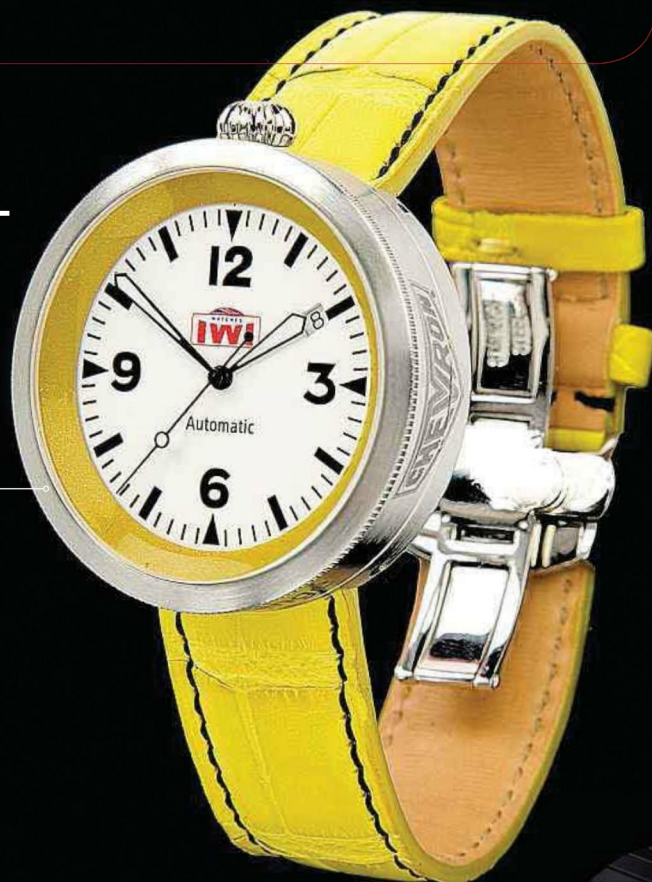
In a world where traction control already takes away one of a driver's greatest skills virtually everywhere except F1, and in an age when the boffins could design a car that could be driven with the throttle either fully on or fully off, leaving the 'driver' to simply steer the self-correcting chassis through the corner, surely the time has come to put the driver back in the driving seat.

LANCASHIRE WATCH SPOT

IWI puts Red Rose county on the horological map, while Porsche Design honours 911 designer Butzi

IWI CHEVRON RACING
FROM: IWIWATCHES.COM PRICE: £2500

The Lancashire town of Darwen might be best known for its cotton mills, but it is also home to the independent watch brand IWI, which was established six years ago by Ian Walsh, a classically-trained British horologist. Walsh began his career helping out in a local jeweller's shop before formally studying his craft at watch-making school in Manchester. IWI (for Ian Walsh International) specialises in distinctive-looking pieces with perfectly round cases and pocket-watch style 12 o'clock winding crowns, loosely based on the look of a dashboard clock. This year, IWI is sponsoring Cheshire sports car builder Chevron (founded in 1965 by the late Derek Bennett just a few miles from Darwen) in the British GT Championships and will also back the Chevron GR8 Challenge series. To mark the partnership, the brand has created a special Chevron watch which will be limited to just 25 pieces, each with a strap and dial detailing in Chevron's signature yellow and with the marque's logo engraved on the side of the case. Like all IWI watches, the special model contains a Swiss movement but has a 41mm case and inner bezel machined in Lancashire. Every watch is hand-assembled, finished and polished by Walsh himself.



ZENITH ESPADA
FROM: ZENITH-WATCHES.COM
PRICE: FROM £4350



The legendary Zenith brand has been enjoying a revival in its fortunes during the past couple of years since the arrival of a new CEO, Jean-Frederic Dufour. Prior to his appointment, Zenith was going off at something of a tangent with a range of decidedly eccentric timepieces that were simply too far-out for most people's tastes.

Dufour has brought the company back in line by the simple expedient of drawing on its truly impressive heritage for inspiration. The new Espada (which sneaks in here because it shares a name with Lamborghini's V12 tourer of the late '60s) is a revamp of a classic model but is horologically interesting because it contains the first non-chronograph version of Zenith's famous 'El Primero' movement, which beats at an accuracy-enhancing rate of 36,000 vibrations per hour instead of the usual 24,000. Like all Zenith watches, the Espada and its mechanism are made entirely in-house. The case is a sensible 40mm in diameter and you can choose from plain steel, steel and gold or rose gold, with either leather straps or matching bracelets.



PORSCHE DESIGN P'6500 40TH ANNIVERSARY SET
FROM: PORSCHE-DESIGN.COM PRICE: EUROS 14,750

The death of Ferdinand 'Butzi' Porsche at the beginning of April came a year before the 50th anniversary of his most legendary creation, the 911. It was 40 years ago, however, that he founded his own design studio, the first product of which was a wristwatch. To mark the anniversary, Porsche Design has created a special edition boxed set of re-issues of

three of the most significant models – the chronograph of 1972 (the world's first all-black wristwatch); the Compass of 1978 (a watch with a case containing a concealed compass) and the Titanium chronograph of 1980 (the first titanium-cased watch). The sets will be made available in a limited edition of 500 units. The watches are not exact copies of the originals, but modern-day versions with slightly larger cases and better components.



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MINI JCW ROADSTER

» DROP-TOP VERSION OF MINI COUPE » FABRIC ROOF » 208BHP TURBO 1.6 » REVISED SUSPENSION

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbocharged
CO2 169g/km **Power** 208bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 206lb ft @ 2000-5100rpm **0-62mph**
 6.5sec (claimed) **Top speed** 147mph (claimed)
Price £24,860 **On sale** Now

We live in a multi-cultural, (mainly) tolerant and sophisticated society. We pretend to know or care about wine, we visit theatres at weekends, we moisturise. And yet when you drive around in the Mini John Cooper Works Roadster it's like you've hurtled straight back in time to an episode of *Till Death Us Do Part*. People actually call you a 'poofter'. Even

usually rational, right-thinking people.

It's a strange phenomenon. Especially when you look at the Roadster's snub nose, wide track, gaudy stripes, big black alloys and hunkered-down ride height, and when you remember that its 1.6-litre turbocharged engine has 208bhp and 206lb ft and that this feisty little hot rod weighs just 1185kg. It's positively Neanderthal, this Mini. Question is, are you man (or woman) enough to handle it?

I'm joking, of course. At least I think I am. Blimey, the 'girly' JCW Roadster is a pointy, aggressive and sometimes wayward machine. It glides and darts along fast A-roads with a real

willingness to change direction and a nervous balance. Throw in a choppy surface and it thumps and yumps and skates and hurls itself along, that excellent little engine rasping and fizzing and agitating the front wheels. You sort of hang on, eyes on stalks, white knuckles wrapped around the thick-rimmed steering wheel that's tugging this way and that, waiting for the rear to skip wide in a heartbeat.

A Lotus engineer would doubtless park it up in a lay-by on a bumpy B-road and put it out of its misery with the help of a can of fuel and a Zippo. But – and maybe this is me going back to a simpler, stupider time – it's quite



TESTED THIS MONTH

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a lot of fun. Let's just say you never forget you're in a proper little sports car. Good job too, as the JCW Roadster costs from £24,860, and our test car with the Chili Pack and various other goodies is £31,235.

The Roadster is, of course, based on the divisive Mini Coupe. The floorpan is reinforced to replace some of the structural rigidity lost by the removal of the backwards baseball cap roof, and the suspension, even the optional Sports Suspension that's part of the Chili pack, is backed off a bit to compensate, too. Even so, it's still a stiff little car and that aggression is mirrored by strong performance. The figures say 0-62mph

in 6.5sec and a top speed of 147mph, and although it doesn't feel quite that strong initially, you soon learn that the engine is mapped to feel almost normally aspirated, boost building with revs right to the red line. Keep it on the boil and the JCW Roadster flies.

Inside it's the usual Mini recipe of funky toggle switches, chunky door pulls and, of course, the huge central speedo that also houses the screen for all the entertainment and communications systems. I sort of feel like I'm being manipulated by the design cleverness, but I still rather like it despite my best cynical intentions.

The driving position is great, the

sports seats aren't quite sporty enough to lock you in place and the steering wheel is the perfect size – but the Alcantara sections are strangely located just where you never hold the wheel. Even so it feels special and quite expensive. Open the fabric roof with the turn of a handle and the flick of a toggle switch on the header rail and the Roadster continues to charm.

First impressions are all about the stiffness of the ride and the speed of the steering. As ever, this Mini is almost hyper-alert on turn-in, so much so that the rear of the car often immediately takes on a bit of attitude. On a smooth road that's great, the Roadster tucking

Below: Roadster has a cloth roof, keeping weight down to just 20kg more than the Coupe it's based on

'THE JCW ROADSTER IS A POINTY, AGGRESSIVE AND SOMETIMES WAYWARD MACHINE'





Above right: interior is business as usual, with big dials and retro toggle switches aplenty.
Top left: seats could be more supportive given the JCW's tenacious grip

into turns with barely any steering lock and the balance staying neutral. Take a lift on turn-in and it also oversteers with the best of 'em. It can be lurid but it's progressive, too.

However, on bumpy roads, that playfulness can become spikiness as the suspension struggles to deal with lateral loads whilst providing vertical control and the stability systems try to smooth away the edges. Even the best ESP isn't much use when the wheels aren't touching tarmac... The structure also shudders and creaks on tough B-roads where the Coupe or hatch would be rock-solid.

Worked really hard, the JCW Roadster can feel ragged, then. And

there's no question that traction is a real issue (there's no limited-slip diff option) even in the dry if you disable the two-stage traction control. But, conversely, the Roadster feels terrifically well-balanced and genuinely exciting on smoother surfaces, and the engine and six-speed manual gearbox are excellent. In pure dynamic terms, there are plenty of better cars for £30,000, but don't discount the JCW Roadster as all style and no substance. **Jethro Bovingdon**

evo RATING ★★★★★

- ★ Feels special, feisty motor
- ★ Easily unsettled on bumpy roads

'THE ROADSTER FEELS TERRIFICALLY WELL-BALANCED AND GENUINELY EXCITING ON SMOOTH SURFACES'



VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTI CABRIOLET

- » GOLF GTI LOSES ITS ROOF
- » SAME 207BHP TURBO ENGINE
- » 'XDS' ELECTRONIC DIFF



SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo
CO2 177g/km **Power** 207bhp @ 5300rpm
Torque 207lb ft @ 1700rpm **0-62mph** 7.3sec
(claimed) **Top speed** 147mph (claimed)
Price £29,310 **On sale** July

So, to continue with the summer special theme, another new ragtop aimed squarely at sun-seeking fashionistas: the Golf GTI cabriolet. And while I'd be lying if I said it was a much more manly driving device than the Mini Roadster, it does come with double the number of seats and an extremely neat folding roof.

Let's start by clearing up a historical anomaly. Everywhere except the UK, this is the very first Golf cabrio to wear a GTI badge; in Britain, VW chose to cheekily rebrand the GLi as a GTI. The question is whether the new car is more deserving of the seminal branding it carries.

It certainly looks the part, sharing the GTI hatch's chunky front bumper and red-lined front grille, plus awesome-looking 18in telephone-dial alloys. At the back there are twin exhaust pipes, and in the cabin the standard 'Jacara' tartan seat trim gives a cool, retro vibe – and is well worth missing the optional leather (as pictured here) to sit on.

Power comes from the familiar 2-litre turbocharged petrol engine, in identical spec to the standard GTI hatchback's, meaning 207bhp rather than the brawnier 232bhp version found in the GTI Edition 35. The Golf cabriolet is already claimed



Above: 2-litre TSI engine is unchanged. Top: windscreen is at a more acute angle than the hatchback's; roof opens or closes in 9.5sec and can be operated at speeds of up to 18mph



to be one of the most rigid soft-tops within the VAG empire, so the GTI doesn't get any specific bodyshell reinforcement, but it does have firmed-up suspension and a 22mm drop in ride height.

On the super-smooth Bavarian tarmac that VW has laid on for the driving, the GTI cabrio makes a strong first impression. Like the standard cabrio, it doesn't suffer from any of the scuttle-shake you'd expect to find in a decapitated hatchback, and the firmed-up springing hasn't come at the expense of comfort; if anything, it feels a bit softer than you'd expect given the size of the wheels.

Like the GTI hatchback, the cabrio gets VW's trick 'XDS' electronic differential system, which mimics the effect of a locking diff by braking the inside front wheel during fast cornering to prevent wheelspin, and when you turn up the pace, it can be felt doing its thing and fighting understeer. Control weights are as per the standard GTI, with decent steering weight and a nice, slick gearshift. There's even a brake pedal firm enough to provide a decent fulcrum for a bit of heel-and-toe work. As with the hatch, you can also forego working your own clutch with the optional DSG.

But there's no disguising the cabrio's mass, and it really blunts the car's performance. A 1458kg kerb weight is decent for a mid-sized ragtop, but it's 140kg more than that of the three-door hatch. The official 0-62mph time of 7.3sec

is only 0.4sec slower than that posted by the hatchback, but on the road it feels considerably more leisurely than that number suggests, with 'proper' GTI levels of performance requiring you to rev the motor well into the sixes. The extra mass doesn't just blunt acceleration, it also takes the edge off the GTI's enthusiasm for corners, with a noticeable hesitation in lock-to-lock responses compared with its tin-top sister.

It's a shame, considering the cabrio's near-£30K price tag, that VW didn't offset its weight disadvantage by giving it the gutsier GTI 35 engine. As it stands, this is definitely a Golf cabrio wearing a GTI badge rather than a cabrio version of the GTI. A small distinction, but an important one.

Mike Duff



Above: cabin has the same GTI treatment as the hatch. Left: cabrio looks smart with the roof up or down. Below: rear-seat space is generous



evo RATING ★★★★★

+ All the GTI ingredients...

- ...saddled with too much weight

MASERATI GRANTURISMO SPORT

» MOST POWERFUL GRANTURISMO YET WITH 454BHP » IMPROVED DAMPING » UPDATED LOOKS

SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 4691cc **CO2** 331g/km
Power 454bhp @ 7000rpm **Torque** 383lb ft @ 4750rpm **0-62mph** 4.7sec (claimed)
Top speed 186mph (claimed) **Price** £90,390 (MC Auto Shift £93,720) **On sale** Now

The Sport also introduces several other notable improvements, including a more powerful version of the charismatic 4.7-litre V8, which is up 21bhp to 454bhp thanks to new pistons, revised valve timing and a re-programmed ECU. The chassis has been subtly tweaked too, with a 12 per cent stiffer rear anti-roll bar and new 'Sport Skyhook' dampers that are standard equipment (fixed dampers are now a no-cost option). The brake discs, meanwhile, gain aluminium centres, helping to reduce unsprung weight by a significant 15 per cent.

Visually, the Sport is very similar to the outgoing 'S'. The front bumper has been tweaked, giving more of the look of the hardcore MC Stradale and improving brake cooling. Daytime-running LEDs have been added to the front lights, the rear light clusters have a 20 per cent darker tint, and some new paint colours have been introduced, including the 'Blu Sofisticato' shown here. Inside, the front seats have been completely redesigned and offer the kind of support you'd expect in such a sporting car, as well as delivering 20mm extra legroom in the rear.

The 'MC Shift' automated manual car drives much as it did before and remains the obvious choice for the hardcore



Top: steering wheel is a new design. Above: rear-seat passengers now have more legroom. Below: silver grille indicates this car is an auto, MC Shift cars get a black grille

Maserati fan, but the 'MC Auto Shift' automatic version is very different. Maserati has managed to reduce the gearchange time on the ZF six-speed gearbox to just 200ms when Sport mode is selected. That's half what it was before and the gearbox now blips the engine on downshifts, making the driving characteristics of the two 'boxes much closer than they were before.

The new Sport Skyhook dampers are significantly better at controlling the annoying initial shudder when you hit a bump, making the car feel much tauter than it did previously. Turn-in seems sharper too, which is no doubt down to that stiffer rear anti-roll bar, while traction and drive out of corners remain as impressive as ever.

The engine's revised ECU seems to have

Trying to make sense of the Maserati GranTurismo line-up is tricky. In the early days it was easy because there was only one model, the 4.2-litre, 399bhp GranTurismo auto. Then in 2008 the 4.7-litre GranTurismo S was introduced with an extra 34bhp, a rowdy exhaust and an automated manual (transaxle) transmission borrowed from the Ferrari 599. The resulting increase in performance was dramatic, though many buyers wished they could have the more sporty characteristics of the 4.7 but without the annoying robotised-manual gearbox. Maserati responded with the GranTurismo S Automatic in 2009, but it had a softer set-up, was marginally slower (thanks to longer gearing) and didn't have the noisy exhaust of the 'S'...

The introduction of this new 'Sport' version should bring an end to the confusion. It replaces the two 'S' models and is available with either an automated manual or a true auto transmission, the rest of the car remaining identical.





reduced the number of crackles from the exhaust on the overrun, which is a shame, but don't think for one moment that this is a quiet car, as the howl emanating from the twin oval exhaust tips is as wondrous as it ever was. The 4.7-litre, Ferrari-designed-and-built engine has to rank as one of the world's great power units and in this specification feels like it has finally come of age.

Handsome, charismatic, sporting and everyday-useable, the automatic GranTurismo Sport is the car Maserati always promised us. It's a shame it's taken five years to get here. **Harry Metcalfe**

EVO RATING ★★★★★

- + Best everyday GranTurismo yet
- Starting to get long in the tooth?



Above: tweaked 4.7-litre V8 now puts out 10bhp more than the version in the MC Stradale road-racer



'THE AUTOMATIC GRANTURISMO SPORT IS THE CAR MASERATI ALWAYS PROMISED US'

BMW M6 CONVERTIBLE

» ALL-NEW BIG 'M' 2+2 » M5 UNDERPINNINGS
» 552BHP AND 501LB FT » 0-62MPH IN 4.3SEC



SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 4395cc, twin-turbo
CO2 239g/km Power 552bhp @ 6000-7000rpm Torque 501lb ft @ 1500-5750rpm
0-62mph 4.3sec (claimed) Top speed 155mph (limited) Price £99,020 On sale September

The M6 has always been the black sheep of the 'M' family. While the M3 and M5 invented their respective niches, the M6 was BMW's response to the high-performance 2+2 crowd. Still, this is an all-new model, so it's time to wipe the slate clean.

BMW has broken with tradition by launching the convertible before the coupe in a bid to drum up some summertime trade. For those who place ultimate precision above all else, the carbon-roofed coupe will be the one to go for, but here on the press launch in California, the soft-top car makes an awful lot of sense.

Strip it bare and you'll find an M5 underneath – only the damper settings have been tweaked. Dominating proceedings is the 4.4-litre V8 with direct injection, variable valve timing, stop-start and two socking great turbos to push power up to 552bhp – that's 52bhp more than its V10 predecessor, despite drinking 30 per cent less fuel.

What defines this engine is its torque, which peaks at 1500rpm and doesn't fall away until 5750rpm. The result is huge flexibility – it's just as happy trickling along as it is rearranging your faces. In a straight line the M6 piles on speed in such a ferocious and sustained manner that you can rarely deploy its full potential on the road. On full-bore upshifts the seven-speed M DCT gearbox gives you another kick in the back for good measure. Drop the roof and it's certainly louder than the M5, though the bassy woofle from the



Above: driver-centric cabin is well equipped, with nav, DAB and Bluetooth all standard. Left: 20in wheels are a £1650 option

exhausts is a tad disappointing.

The steering offers a good level of feedback (assistance is hydraulic), body control is excellent, front-end grip is endless and, for a 552bhp rear-drive car, the M6 feels surprisingly benign. The suspension is supple in its softest mode and erases body roll in its firmest, but that said, the car feels like it is battering the road into submission rather than working with it.

In pure engineering terms the M6 flirts with perfection, but the result isn't quite the sum of its parts. It's competing with very talented rivals (XKR-S, R8 Spyder) and for £100,000 we had hoped for more finesse. We'll reserve final judgement, however, for a drive on UK roads. **Jack Rix**

EVO RATING ★★★★★

- + Monster pace and super-stiff chassis
- It's still a difficult thing to fall for



FORD SHELBY GT500

» FASTEST MUSTANG EVER » 650BHP SUPERCHARGED V8 » 202MPH CLAIMED TOP SPEED

SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 5812cc, supercharged **CO2** n/a
Power 650bhp @ 6500rpm **Torque** 631lb ft
 @ 4000rpm **0-60mph** 3.7sec (claimed)
Top speed 202mph (claimed)
Price \$54,995 (US) **On sale** Now (US)

With 650 horsepower booming out of a deep-pitched woof from quad 3.5-inch exhaust tips, who wouldn't want to hear as much of the 2013 Ford Shelby GT500 as possible? Jamal Hameedi, chief engineer of Ford's Special Vehicle Team, understands completely. 'We're right up against the 80 decibel limit,' he says, referencing the maximum drive-by noise level under US regulations.

That, Hameedi says, is the main reason the world's most powerful production V8 won't be sold worldwide. And that

is sure to be a cause of regret. Ford says the GT500 will reach a top speed of 202mph, hit 60mph in 3.7 seconds and 100 in less than eight. And all that for a base price of just \$54,995 in the US, full Ford factory warranty included. You can even get it with a convertible top, although that comes with a 155mph governed top speed.

The massive power (up 110bhp!) comes from a new 5.8-litre engine, bored out from the previous 5.4-litre displacement. A 2.3-litre Eaton TVS supercharger feeds in 15psi of boost. Compression increases to 9.0:1, and high-lift camshafts are borrowed from the Ford GT, with which the Shelby shares its basic engine architecture. An over-rev feature raises the red line from the nominal 6250rpm limit to 7000rpm for up to 8 seconds at a

time. Meanwhile the cooling system has been suitably uprated to cope. Air rushes straight in via the gaping, grille-less snout, through a three-row intercooler (upgraded from a two-row design) and past a new radiator fan and shroud.

Don't let the ancient solid rear axle fool you into thinking that the GT500 is an old-style all-ate-up-with-motor muscle car; it's engineered to be a true all-around sports car. The original 1967 GT500 came with 15-inch wheels. The 2013 car comes with 15-inch front brakes, capped by six-piston Brembo calipers. It has a carbonfibre driveshaft, which eliminates a high-speed resonance found in the previous two-piece aluminum unit and saves 16.5kg. An optional performance package upgrades the rear limited-slip differential to a Torsen



Above: Cobra motif is a reminder of Shelby heritage. Main pic: if you prefer less smoke, the 2013 car has launch control for the first time

'THE GT500 MIGHT NOT BE THE DUMB AMERICAN, BUT IT'S STILL BRUTISH. IT'S JUST AS AWESOME AS YOU'D EXPECT FROM A 650BHP MUSTANG'



unit and adds two-mode adjustable Bilstein dampers. Oil, transmission, and differential coolers come in the track package. Thus equipped, the GT500 is designed to survive a full day of lapping, although Recaro seats are a likely necessity to cope with the 1G of grip from the tyres. Don't let the 3.31 final drive ratio give the impression that acceleration was sacrificed for top speed either. The Shelby is quicker than the Ford GT to 130mph, after which the GT's slippery profile proves to be an advantage.

So the GT500 might not be the dumb American, but it's still brutish. The clutch is heavy and engages at the end of a long pedal travel. The shift lever is stiff and lacks any play. Blip the throttle in the lower gears and the

power comes in instantly. It's just as awesome as you'd expect from a 650bhp Mustang. Lessening the intimidation for novice drivers is a programmable launch control system that controls slip at the rear wheels and helps provide consistent quarter-mile runs. A sport mode in the stability control system helps further reduce the fear factor. Both of these systems can be fully disabled, and with familiarity the GT500 becomes an increasingly rewarding driving experience. The only downer is the electric-assisted steering, which lacks feedback and doesn't increase in weight proportionate to cornering loads.

The GT500 is tolerable as a daily driver, but not by a big margin. Those used to the comfort of an M3 or 911 would find the GT500 appalling,

Above: bargain price means economies had to be made somewhere, and interior quality is no match for European sports cars, but then few Europeans have the street presence and sheer shove of the latest Shelby

especially in terms of interior plastics. Satnav and heated seats aren't even standard kit. But that's not really the point here. Whereas the sophistication of the rival Camaro ZL1 challenges American sports-car stereotypes, the GT500 reinforces them, almost patriotically so. It's like the Shelby's supercar-level performance is just as much about a two-finger salute to European exotics as it is about proving it can be done at such an affordable price. In a lot of ways, this car mimics the nature of its recently deceased namesake. Carroll would be proud. **Mike Austin**

EVO RATING ★★★★★

- ✚ A fitting memorial to Carroll Shelby
- ✚ No official UK imports



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SPECIFICATION

Engine V8, 5461cc, twin-turbo
CO2 322g/km **Power** 537bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 560lb ft @ 2000-5000rpm **0-62mph**
 5.4sec (claimed) **Top speed** 130mph (limited)
Price €137,504 (UK price TBC) **On sale** July

MERCEDES G63 AMG

» NEW G-WAGEN FLAGSHIP
 » TWIN-TURBO V8 » LIKELY
 £121K PRICE TAG FOR THE UK

Let's be honest, the G63 AMG shouldn't even exist today, but somehow it's still here. While the rest of the performance-SUV market gets ever more sophisticated and mainstream, the G63 lives on in its own analogue world, filled with live axles, ladder chassis and thumping great V8 engines that the rest of the European industry left behind decades ago.

The new G63 is part of the latest generation of G-wagen (a breed now some 33 years old) and with AMG models claiming around 40 per cent of total G-wagen production these days (6600 units last year, or double the 2009 figure), the G63 is more important to Mercedes than you might have thought.

This new version gets the ubiquitous twin-turbo 5461cc V8 we've sampled in numerous AMG models before, punching its 537bhp to the tarmac via Mercedes' regular seven-speed torque-converter automatic gearbox and permanent 4WD. You won't be surprised to hear that this gives the G63 plenty of go (5.4sec to 62mph and a limited top speed of 130mph), but from a driving point of view the good news ends here because the only way to describe the G63's handling is 'comically bad'. While regular cornering is just entertainingly awful, enthusiastic cornering is next to impossible because



the 20-inch (Yokohama) tyres seem incapable of keeping a grip on the tarmac passing underneath, even at seemingly sedate speeds. To make matters worse, the steering must rate as the slowest and with the least feel of any performance car on sale today.

And yet there is something peculiarly alluring about the G63. Whether it's the carved-from-stone build quality, the rumbling V8 bellow (erupting from the twin exhaust pipes poking out from under the sill) or the bluff, chicken-house-on-wheels exterior styling that's seducing me I'm not sure, but the G63's unique character in today's increasingly monotone world just about keeps me from giving it the last rites.

The G63 is one of those cars that makes zero sense; there's not even much room inside, while the fuel consumption is brutal, and yet you know people are going to buy this car and I applaud them for doing so. The G63's biggest failing, though, is it's too expensive. It's expected to be £121,000 when RHD sales start later this year and that is simply too much for what's on offer.

Harry Metcalfe

evo RATING ★★★★★

- It exists; epic soundtrack
- Ancient chassis, silly price

MERCEDES ML350

» ALL-NEW DIESEL ML
 » 0-62MPH IN 7.4SEC



SPECIFICATION

Engine V6, 2987cc, turbo-diesel
CO2 189g/km **Power** 255bhp @ 3600rpm
Torque 457lb ft @ 1600-2400rpm **0-62mph**
 7.4sec (claimed) **Top speed** 139mph (limited)
Price £48,490 **On sale** Now

Yes, there's still the ML63 AMG (and the G63!) for anyone who can afford the purchase price and punishing running costs. But it's this all-new, diesel-gargling ML350 Bluetec that offers a far more real-world take on the modern performance SUV.

With 255bhp – and 457lb ft of torque – it's brawnier than the previous ML350 CDI, but it's also considerably greener, managing an official 39.2mpg compared with the old car's 32.5mpg. Not bad when you consider the claimed 7.4sec 0-62mph time.

The third-generation ML also gets more visual bling – arguably not something its predecessors were exactly lacking – and a higher quality cabin. The dynamic experience remains pretty much as before – this is a big, heavy car – with the clear emphasis on comfort rather than driver reward. On smooth tarmac it's impressively refined and whisper quiet. Sadly, though, when asked to deal with bumpy roads the car's air springs lose their composure and give a heaving ride quality familiar to anyone who went to school on a '70s Leyland bus.

On the plus side, the new ML steers accurately and – with due account taken of its weight and centre of gravity – deals with corners well enough at normal speeds. Get too keen and the stability control seems to take personal offence, slamming on the anchors the moment slip is detected.

Mike Duff

evo RATING ★★★★★

- Pace, economy
- Not as sharp as an X5



From the top: Metcalfe scans the horizon for corners; giant wheels and tyres but little grip; mighty twin-turbo V8; quilted and perforated leather



AUDI A3

» NEW THIRD-GEN MODEL » REDUCED WEIGHT » NEW ENGINES

SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1798cc, turbo
CO2 130g/km **Power** 178bhp @ 5100rpm
Torque 184lb ft @ 1250-5000rpm **0-62mph**
 7.2sec (claimed) **Top speed** 144mph (claimed)
Price £24,410 **On sale** Now

This isn't just the new Audi A3. It's also a preview of dozens of VW group cars that will be launched in the next decade. That's because it's the first VAG model to use MQB (*Modularer Querbaukasten*, or Modular Transverse Matrix), the new transverse front-engined platform that will underpin everything from Polos to Passats from now on.

Things aren't quite as revolutionary on the surface: the A3 is crisply and classily styled, but you'd be hard pushed to spot it's the all-new, third-generation car at first glance. Same goes for the inside, too. Thanks to a timely eye on weight-saving, however, Audi has managed to shave up to 80kg from the mk3 compared with equivalent mk2s, rewinding to close to the mass of the 1996 mk1, despite larger dimensions and an abundance of extra technology and safety equipment.

You feel the effects of the diet the first time you come across a corner. With a sizeable proportion of the cuts coming from the front axle and bonnet, the nose turns keenly and grips gamely, whether you're in a front-drive or quattro-equipped car. There's far less roll than you might expect and understeer only prevails when you get really greedy with entry speeds. Specify Sport or S-line trim and, for the first time, you can keep the standard suspension, which, as our test car proves, is a welcome development – it's one of the more supple Audis of late.

There's a 'but' coming, though, and it's the one I'd wager you're expecting. The electric power steering is very light and

provides little feedback. The ease with which you can string together a sequence of bends is impressive, but progress isn't particularly pulsating. Here's hoping VW, SEAT, et al get the spanners out when the new platform comes their way.

The A3's engine range is new, but broadly familiar in format. At launch, a 120bhp 1.4-litre TFSI kicks things off just north of £19K, while a 148bhp 2.0 TDI will mop up most sales in the UK.

The sportiest choice until the new S3 arrives next year is this 1.8-litre TFSI (seven-speed S-tronic only at launch, but a six-speed manual follows this autumn), and with 178bhp and 184lb ft it's on level pegging with the twin-charged 1.4 TSI found elsewhere in the group. But unlike that engine, to access the 1.8's power you need to wring out every rev, a typical turbocharged mid-range absent. This is at odds with the new A3's demeanour; asked what was his main objective when developing its dynamics, Audi chassis man Victor Underberg answered 'comfort'. Overall, though, that's just what his new car delivers.

Stephen Dobie

evo RATING ★★★★★

- Classy and competent to drive
- Fun isn't high on the agenda



New A3's looks are definitely a case of evolution not revolution; cabin still has a feel-good factor



AUDI A7 BiTDI

- » BI-TURBO DIESEL V6
- » 309BHP AND 479LB FT
- » 0-62MPH IN 5.3SEC



SPECIFICATION

Engine V6, 2967cc, twin-turbo diesel
CO2 169g/km **Power** 309bhp @ 3900-4500rpm **Torque** 479lb ft @ 1450-2800rpm
0-62mph 5.3sec (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph (limited) **Price** £54,120 **On sale** Now

We've already driven Audi's new twin-turbo diesel engine on various overseas launches, but our first chance to sample it in the UK came in this full-spec A7 S-line. And, on first impressions, it looks set – along with its even more conservative A6 BiTDI sisters – to become the ultimate Q-car. On the tailgate there's just a nondescript 'TDI' badge – and under the bonnet there's an engine capable of delivering frankly comical levels of performance.

The headline 309bhp is just part of the story; the more relevant figure is the 479lb ft of torque, available from just 1450rpm. Together with an eight-speed autobox capable of deftly shuffling its ratios, the A7 has a real-world pace that little can match. It's a point proved by a chance encounter with a luckless Lexus IS-F, which, despite its best efforts, finds itself overhauled by a diesel Audi.

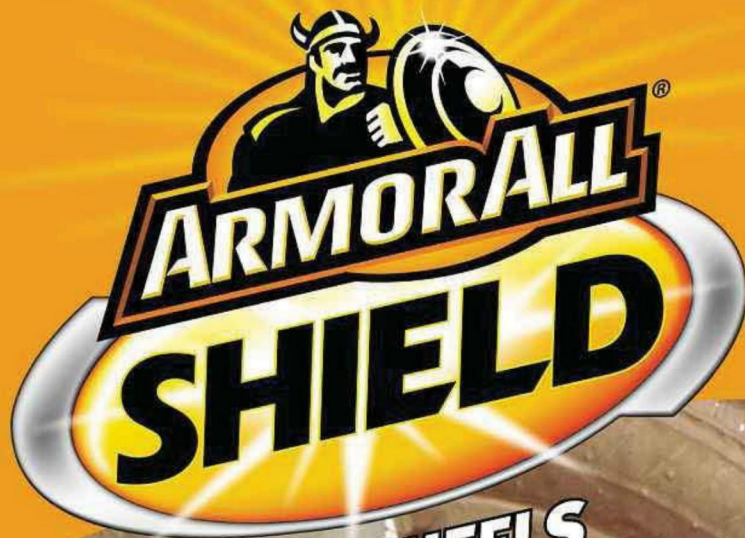
The rest of the A7 experience remains as before – handsome design, a great cabin and a mostly inert driving experience thanks to Audi's trademark feel-free steering. Still, it's hard not to be impressed by something that can go this quickly and still manage an indicated 35mpg after a week's hard use. **Mike Duff**



Left: new bi-turbo diesel engine makes the big A7 an astonishingly rapid car

evo RATING ★★★★★

- Stunning performance, strong economy
- Price, over-light controls



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STASIS AUDI S5

» POWER UP BY 82BHP » SUSPENSION UPGRADE » BIG BRAKES

SPECIFICATION

Engine V6, 2995cc, supercharger
CO2 n/a **Power** 410bhp @ 6400rpm **Torque**
 391lb ft @ 4500rpm **0-60mph** 4.5sec (est)
Top speed 175mph (est) **Conversion price**
 £14,400 **On sale** Spring 2013

The chances are you won't have heard of US-based tuning firm Stasis, but thanks to a tie-up with UK-based Revo Technik, that's about to change. The Audi S5 Sportback you see here features a mix of Stasis's Signature Series Challenge Edition package (which has Audi dealer-approved status in the USA) and some additional Revo modifications. Together, these will form a European Edition upgrade that will be launched over here for the S4 and S5 under the Stasis brand next year.

In standard tune the Audi S4/S5 is a fine car, but just lacking the ultimate edge to its performance and handling dynamics. This car addresses both those issues, with a combination of performance engine software, a cat-back exhaust system, forged 20in wheels, a Bilstein and Eibach suspension set-up and a 390mm six-pot front brake kit.

Judged on looks alone this S5 is an absolute winner, but it's the way it delivers its performance that's particularly impressive. The blown V6 is smooth as silk, yet revs with much greater urgency than the standard car. Rather than making you feel inclined to short-shift, it rewards all the way to the red line.

The car feels good for its claimed 410bhp and 391lb ft (up from 328bhp and 325lb ft), powering to an easy 170mph on Bruntingthorpe's 1.6-mile straight and delivering hearty in-gear performance on



Top: Stasis S5 hit 170mph with ease. Below: despite the low stance and big wheels, ride quality is impressive

the road. The soundtrack is great too, with brilliant rifle-shot reports on upshifts and decent refinement at a steady cruise. The brakes are mighty, with plenty of outright power yet all the smooth progression you need for less extreme everyday use.

Despite running a low ride height, the chassis, although firm, has superb body control and none of the crashiness that afflicts Audi's 444bhp RS5 when running big rims. At Bruntingthorpe this S5 is stable yet playful, while quick driving on the great roads that surround the proving ground reveal all the bite, traction and stability you want combined with a more responsive, less flat-footed feel.

At £14,400 for the full conversion it's a significant outlay, but the results are deeply impressive. If you want an S5 that has the pace of an RS5 and a blend of ride and handling that leaves Audi's V8-powered model in the shade, this is the car for you.

Richard Meaden

EVO RATING ★★★★★

- + Big performance boost, sweet chassis
- Price, Stasis a relative unknown in UK



evoDriven

FORD FOCUS 1.0 ECOBOOST

» NEW THREE-POT ENGINE
 » 123BHP AND 114G/KM



SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 3-cyl, 999cc, turbo
CO2 114g/km **Power** 123bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 125lb ft @ 1400-4500rpm **0-62mph**
 11.3sec (claimed) **Top speed** 120mph (claimed)
Price £17,945 **On sale** Now

Can a 1-litre engine really work in a family-size, 1300kg hatchback? It should; downsizing and dropping cylinder-counts is rife, and Ford's petrol-powered 'EcoBoost' 1-litre, three-pot turbo is a bit special. A brand-new design, it's physically tiny but packed with technology to deliver the required performance. There's a 99bhp version and this one, with 123bhp, which delivers 56.5mpg and CO2 of 114g/km. The alternative is the 113bhp 1.6-litre turbodiesel, which costs virtually the same but offers much more torque, greater performance and nearly 70mpg.

Fire up the warbly little triple and it's whispery quiet and wonderfully smooth where a diesel would be hammery and vibratory. It's encouragingly punchy from low revs, too, suggesting it's got the balls to haul the mass of the Focus.

Turns out there's not much more there when you floor it, performance levelling out with 3000rpm still to go, but this Focus is agile and willing enough in cut-and-thrust driving. It's less happy motorway cruising, because it takes big throttle movements to maintain a steady speed and the electric power steering is sticky and heavy about the straight-ahead.

The biggest problem, though, is that driven moderately, our test car managed just 41mpg. **John Barker**

EVO RATING ★★★★★

- + Refined and smooth
- Not that frugal

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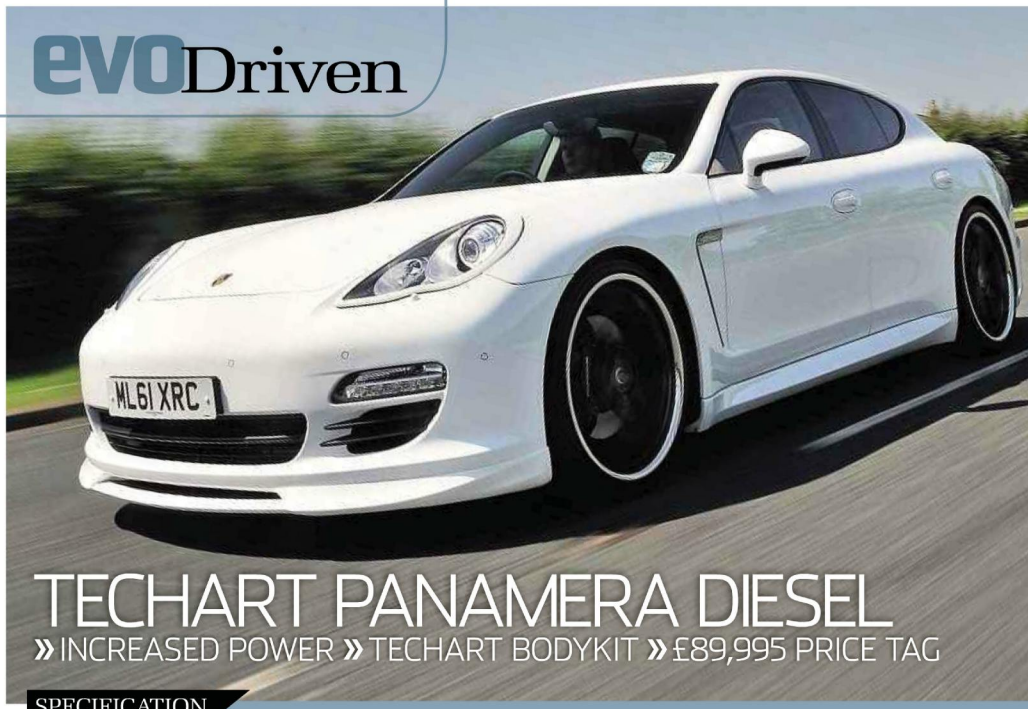
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TECHART PANAMERA DIESEL

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SPECIFICATION

Engine V6, 2967cc, twin-turbo diesel
CO2 172g/km **Power** 295bhp (rpm n/a) **Torque**
 480lb ft (rpm n/a) **0-62mph** 6.3sec (est) **Top**
speed 155mph (est) **Price** £89,995
On sale Now (www.tech9.ms for full details)

So we roll into Tech9's car park and swoon. Look right and there's a Carrera GT; next to it is a 996 GT3 RS in white with blue decals; peeking out from behind the large roller door is a GT2 with some tasty RS additions, and raised high on a ramp, Tech9's historic tarmac rally 911 is taking shape: tiny, stripped to the barest of bones, finished with a ducktail spoiler. This is my sort of place.

You'll forgive me a pang of regret that I'm not here to drive a 911 or a Carrera GT. No, my task is Panamera-shaped and powered by diesel. Tech9 is the UK's sole distributor for TechArt Performance, and the Panamera Diesel has become a pretty crucial model for them in the UK. I might find it hard to fathom a £89,995 Panamera powered by the bad stuff, but for people running their Porsche through a business it makes financial sense and the TechArt styling upgrades provide all the presence that anyone could want...

Outputs are up from 247bhp and 406lb



From the top: body kit includes splitter and skirts; 22in alloys; pumped-up V6; improved paddles

ft to around 295bhp and 480lb ft and TechArt paddles are an improvement on Porsche's regular PDK shifters, plus there's a new front splitter, headlight surrounds, side skirts, rear diffuser and roof spoiler. And some mighty 22-inch TechArt alloys. The factory optional adaptive air suspension with PASM dampers is unchanged.

Despite the huge wheels, the Panamera is surprisingly composed. There's an extra edge to the ride but only somebody expecting S-class waftiness would find it an unreasonable compromise. The engine, which is tuned by Tech9's own eXpedio module – a system that piggybacks the standard ECU so that when it's removed there's no way to detect it was ever fitted – is refined and really muscular. The standard Diesel isn't a particularly quick car but this demonstrator performs much more enthusiastically. There's better low- and mid-range torque and more energy at higher revs, too. The eXpedio module can be fitted to any Diesel for £1995 plus VAT.

As for the TechArt styling upgrades – well, that's a matter of personal taste. They unquestionably lend the Panamera even more menace and, if you want to make a statement, then few saloon cars attract as much attention. However, it does seem slightly disingenuous to have the swagger but not the manic performance of the Turbo model.

Jethro Bovingdon



INFINITI FX30d

» GT PREMIUM SPEC
 » V6 TURBO-DIESEL
 » 0-62MPH IN 8.3SEC



SPECIFICATION

Engine V6, 2993cc turbo-diesel
CO2 238g/km **Power** 235bhp @ 3750rpm
Torque 406lb ft @ 1750rpm
0-62mph 8.3sec (claimed) **Top speed** 132mph
 (claimed) **Price** £51,315 **On sale** Now

We've got to wait a bit longer for the 'Vettel' edition of the Infiniti FX, which at least gives us more time to get used to the idea of its £100,000 price tag. But in the meantime Infiniti has launched a revised version of the standard car, featuring similar styling tweaks and with more standard equipment. It's called the FX30d, tested here in GT Premium spec.

FX engine choices are as before, with a 3.7-litre V6 and a 5-litre V8 adding a bit of spice to the pricelist, but the vast majority of European versions are shipping with the 3-litre V6 turbodiesel that combines a respectable 235bhp with 406lb ft of torque. It's not as powerful as a BMW X5 40d or the new Mercedes ML350 Bluetec (featured on p45) but the 8.3sec 0-62mph time is still respectably brisk for something this shape and size, thanks in large part to the quick reactions of the seven-speed autobox.

Standard kit on the GT Premium spec includes various active safety systems, including lane departure warning and a frontal collision alarm that sounds an alert if it thinks you're about to hit something. Nanny is always watching. The driving experience remains painless, with lots of grip, decent steering and decent ride considering those vast 21-inch alloys. But for excitement, we're going to have to wait for that Vettel Edition.

Mike Duff

EVO RATING ★★★★★

- + Excellent performance upgrade
- Pricey bodykit

EVO RATING ★★★★★

- + Looks good, decent performance
- But it's no X5

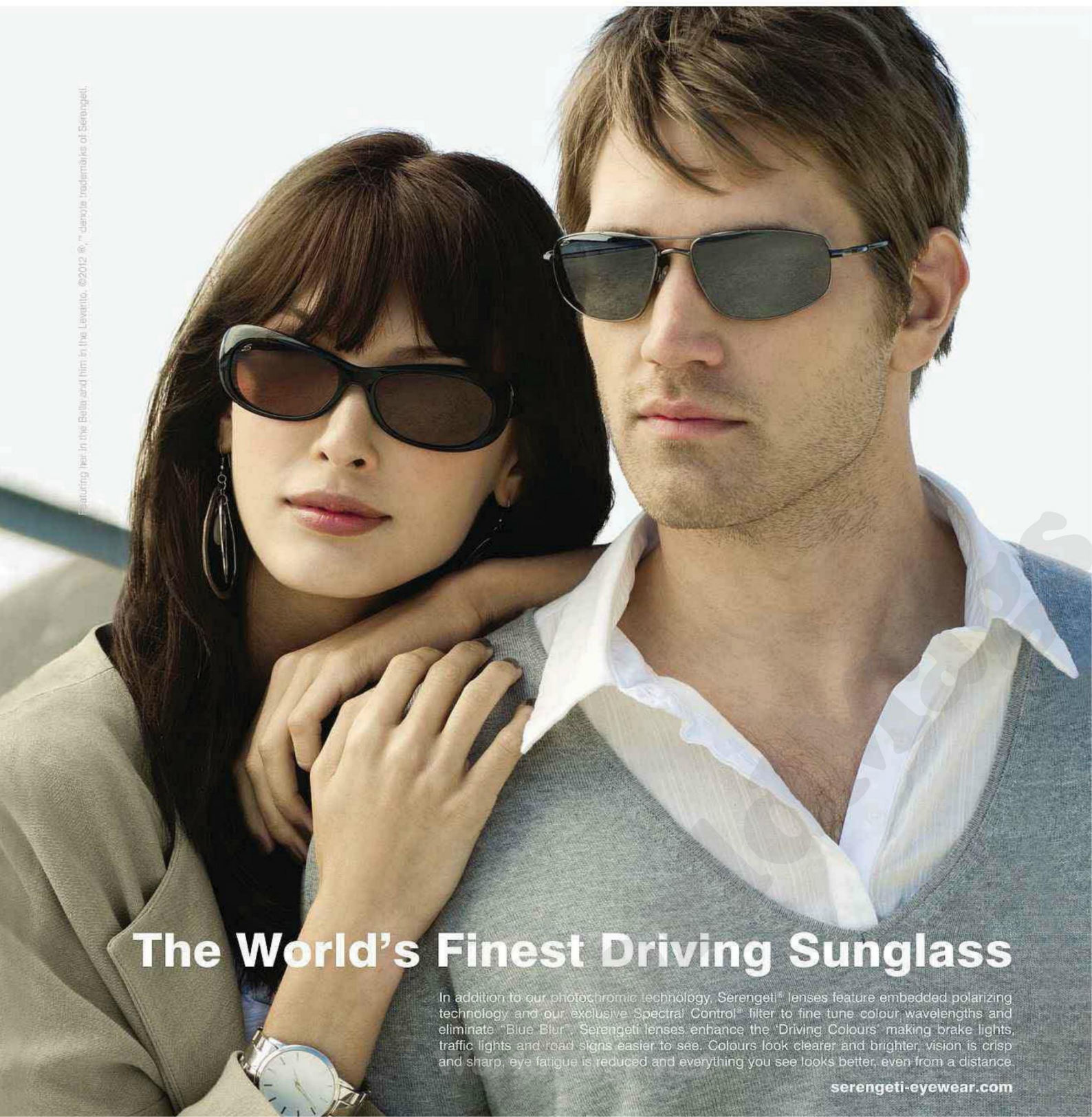


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WHAT'S PUT THE SAND IN YOUR SUNCREAM THIS MONTH?

LETTER OF THE MONTH

The bear necessities for fun

Re your Panda v Up test (evo 171), having driven both myself, it struck me as a strange decision to come down in favour of the Up.

The main focus of your review seems to be the fact that the Up has superior feel – neutral chassis, very good damping, better steering feel. It's true, the Up chassis is fantastically balanced, the damping is wonderful, and the accuracy of the steering is great. But, as you say, the steering is far lighter than the Panda's, and that's just the start.

In reality, the most fun in a car is to be had whilst close to the limit of grip. The Panda probably has less grip, is less balanced, and less predictable. And that's what makes it

so good! Each corner is a challenge that you want to return to and try again, try to perfect, try to predict the reaction of the car. It is this challenge that personifies everything that is good about the Panda. It encourages you to have fun wherever you drive. It has character.

Sure, the Up is probably of higher quality inside, but the Panda no longer lags behind. And VW seems to miss a trick here, too. Drab plastics do not inspire enthusiasm.

Imagine it's the end of a long day at work. Out of the two, I know which one would put a smile on my face, and which one would merely act as a set of wheels to get me home again.

William van Es

'THE PANDA HAS LESS GRIP, IS LESS BALANCED AND LESS PREDICTABLE. THAT'S WHAT MAKES IT FUN!'

Unlike us, reader William van Es has got a bit of a downer on the Up



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Spyder's tangled web

Unlike Iain Cameron (evomail, 170), I believe Harry Metcalfe's scepticism of Porsche's 918 Spyder wonder-hybrid to be well founded. A Porsche supercar should exist to take the thrill of driving to a new level. To do so it must have maximum agility, achieved by low weight, initiating the virtuous cycle of lower power and strength requirements, thereby further reducing weight, fuel consumption and emissions.

The EU test cycle is only part of the environmental equation, which includes the materials, energy and pollution involved in manufacturing the electric motors, batteries and myriad associated components, and in producing the electricity used from external sources to charge the batteries.

If Porsche put the time and money it is spending on developing the agility-sapping 375kg of hybrid technology – plus the resultant un-virtuous-cycle weight increase of the rest of the car – into further lightening of a petrol-only 918, it might well have less overall environmental impact as well as better handling and ride.

Like the Bugatti Veyron (does endless complexity in combatting heat sound familiar?), I can't help but think that the 918 project is led by a desire to prove technological superiority by numbers for the glory of the company and to achieve sales by appealing to customers' vanity rather than offering pure driving thrills or even real environmental benefits. Is this departure from Porsche's admirable tradition of giant-killing performance from low weight a sign of decadent times or increasing VW ownership? **Hal Walter**



Above: Evoque the latest chapter in Jaguar Land Rover's success story. JLR deserves more credit, reckons Hugh Edmondson. Meanwhile Hal Walter shares Harry Metcalfe's scepticism about the 918 Spyder (below)

Evoque's missing inches

Whilst I admire the ambition of McLaren and Lotus, even if confidence in the latter has taken a dip right now, there's a British car manufacturer that is actually delivering, and at scale, but not getting the coverage it deserves. I'm referring to Jaguar Land Rover. Surely JLR deserves more column inches as it continues to deliver great cars that are British engineered and built and selling the world over.

Take the Evoque. This is a car that is not for me, for personal taste reasons. However, I have to admit it is brilliant. It is to 4x4s what the new Mini and Fiat 500 are to superminis. It looks very similar to its original concept, and manages to make a 4x4 look good, something that Mercedes, Porsche, Audi, etc, with their budgets and expertise haven't been able to do. It is also, by all accounts, a very good car, and judging by how many are out there, selling very well. It will also make JLR money to spend developing more exciting cars in the range, such as the XKR-S and new F-type, which will get me more excited,

and give you more to write about.

Let's be a bit less bashfully British about this! They may not be the pure sports cars of McLaren and Lotus, but this is a business that is genuinely moving the dial for the car industry, and it's based right here! That has to be worth celebrating. For the record, I am neither a Brummie nor a JLR owner.

Hugh Edmondson

Couldn't agree more. We've already given plenty of coverage to the Evoque and will continue to do so, along with current and forthcoming Jaguars – Ed.

Flaws in grand plan

What planet is Stephen Taylor on (Letter of the Month, issue 171)? He wants expensive tyres and a turbocharger adding to the Subaru BRZ and expects this for a grand? If Subaru gave the car 250bhp and 250lb ft as he wishes, other things would need changing like the clutch and brakes. The cost would rise by 5000 quid minimum, and the weight by something like 150kg. Insurance would rise, too. Turbos are not an easy fix. The car is unique. Leave it as it is. I wanted higher power, so I drive a mapped Focus RS Mk2, but I love the pure design of the BRZ. **Ian Neal**

Autobahn outed

Oh no! You've outed my favourite stretch of autobahn in your M5/Lotus Carlton article (evo 170). The E42 is indeed a great road. At the southern end, just before the A48 junction, you crest a brow and are greeted with a panoramic view of the Eifel hills and an arrow-straight two-





DMS 997 TURBO
"IT'S EPIC, HILARIOUS AND
ADDICTIVE IN EVERY GEAR,
YET DOCILE WHEN CRUISING"
EVO SEPT '08

DMS 535D
"LAUGH-OUT-LOUD FAST"
EVO JUNE '05

DMS 996 TURBO
"STUPENDOUS EXPLOITABLE
PERFORMANCE"
EVO AUG '04

DMS 335I
"AS QUICK AS AN M3 ON
THE ROAD"
EVO MARCH '09

DMS SL65 BLACK SERIES
"IT FEELS LIKE THE LOVE CHILD
OF AN SL65 AND A PORSCHE
GT2" EVO OCT '10

DMS 135I
"THE STANDARD CAR IS GREAT
BUT DMS HAVE SOMEHOW
MANAGED TO TAKE IT TO
THE NEXT LEVEL"
BMW CAR MAY '09

DMS SL55 AMG
"THIS CAR IS STUPENDOUSLY
FAST"
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DMS RS6 V10
"THICK LOW END TORQUE
MORPHS INTO OHMIGOD
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EVO MARCH '09

DMS 330CD
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AUTOCAR OCT '04

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997 TURBO 3.6 » 625+ BHP
997 GT2 RS » 670+ BHP
996 TURBO / GT2 » 600+ BHP
997 CARRERA S PDK » 400+ BHP
997 CARRERA S » 376+ BHP
997 CARRERA » 348 BHP
997 CARRERA PDK » 368 BHP
997 GT3 » UP TO 436 BHP
996 3.6 » 344 BHP
BOXSTER 3.4S » 336+ BHP
CAYMAN S » 342 BHP
CAYENNE GTS » 440 BHP
CAYENNE TURBO 4.5 » 565+ BHP
CAYENNE TURBO 4.8 » 578+ BHP
CAYENNE TURBO S 4.8 » 600+ BHP
CAYENNE DIESEL » 300+ BHP

MERCEDES-BENZ:

SL65 BLACK SERIES » 720+ BHP
& DE-LIMIT
SL65 AMG » 650 BHP & DE-LIMIT
AMG 55 KOMPRESSOR » 580+ BHP
C63 AMG » 530+ BHP & DE-LIMIT
SL63 AMG » 560+ BHP & DE-LIMIT
RE-MAP & LOWER ABC SUSPENSION
CL600 BI-TURBO » 580+ BHP
S500 2008 » 411+BHP
SLK55 AMG » 389 BHP & DE-LIMIT
SLK 350 » 328 BHP
SLK 200K » 205+ BHP
C220 CDI (W204) » 210 BHP
280/300 CDI V6 » 257 BHP
320 CDI V6 » 274 BHP
350 CDI V6 » 312 BHP
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4.7/5.5 V8 BI-TURBO » PLEASE CALL

BMW:

M5 V10 » 548+ BHP 205 MPH
X5M / X6M » 618 BHP
M3 E90/92 » 445 BHP & DE-LIMIT
M3 E46 » 370 BHP & DE-LIMIT
F10 520D » 221 BHP
F10 530D » 296 BHP
F10 535D » 358 BHP
335i/135i/ X6 » 370+ BHP & DE-LIMIT
123D » 252 BHP
330D E90 » 296+ BHP
320D E90 » 209 BHP
330D E46 » 260+ BHP
730D » 290+ BHP
X5 4.0D / 740D » 358 BHP
X5 3.0D » 278 BHP
X6 X50i 4.4 » 500+BHP
535D / 335D / X5 SD » 334 BHP

EXOTIC & MISC:

FERRARI CALIFORNIA » 487 BHP
FERRARI 599 » 647 BHP
FERRARI 430 » 525 BHP
GALLARDO » 546 BHP
GALLARDO LP560 » 600+ BHP
MURCIELAGO LP640 » 707 BHP
MASERATI GRANTURISMO » 438 BHP
MASERATI QUATTROPORTE » 438 BHP
GRANTURISMO S / MC » 479+ BHP
AUDI RS6 V10 » 680+BHP & DE-LIMIT
AUDI R8 V10 » 592+ BHP
AUDI B7 RS4/ R8 » 439 BHP & DE-LIMIT
AUDI Q7/A8 4.2 TDI » 387 BHP
AUDI (ALL MODELS) 30TDI » 298 BHP
AUDI S3 / GOLF R » 317+ BHP
RANGE ROVER 4.4 TDV8 » 385BHP
RANGE ROVER 3.6 TDV8 » 338 BHP
R ROVER SPORT 3.0D » 295 BHP
R ROVER SPORT 2.7D » 240 BHP
BENTLEY CGT / F-SPUR » 620 BHP
GT SPEED / SUPERSPORT » 680+ BHP

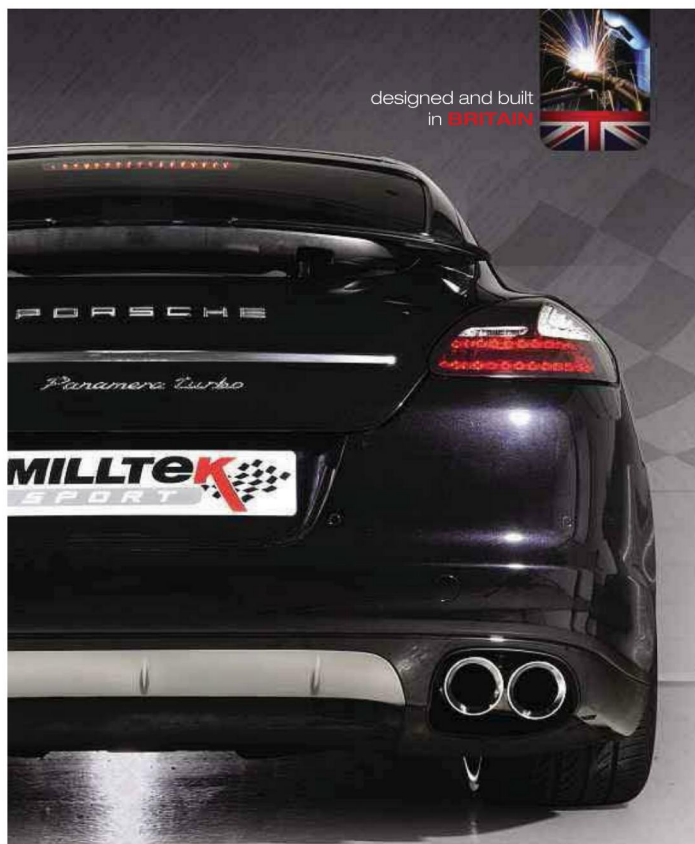
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I have maxed many cars there, from a TVR Chimaera through to a GT3, which reached a GPS-verified 302kph (188mph) on its fourth run of the day. Each experience provides high adrenaline and huge exhilaration. Of course traffic and weather conditions are critical, but I love the Germans for trusting me to use this road safely. It all makes the UK 70/80mph debate seem rather puerile!

Nick Dawson

Halting rallying's slide

I was just reading Tiff's thoughts reference the decline of rallying (Track & Racing, *evo* 171). Surely the thing lacking is the Subaru and Mitsubishi factor.

Back in the day, you could pop along to your local dealer and pick up a car that not only looked like the real deal, it was also a pretty good road tool. This allowed fans something to aspire to that was real-world obtainable. Surely that is the point of any top-level motorsport for the manufacturers – improving the brand, increasing market presence, selling cars.

So let the teams make the cars that they want, but there must be a showroom version that is 80 per cent identical and with a capped list price, of say £30K, with a minimum production run of 2000 – or send them back to the Group N days.

Either way, the man in the street will take notice, people will drag themselves back into the forest to see a glimpse of someone driving a car that looks like theirs, and when little Johnny gets dropped at school on Monday, the family car's a WRC winner!

James Mansfield

Porter's Porsche

Enjoyed Richard Porter's excellent article on craving a 911 (Petrolhead, 171) but he has dismissed the best 911 without delving properly into the amazing 996. It's true the gen 1 cars had problems, but these were resolved in the gen 2 car. I have

owned my 996 Targa for over three years and in that time and 12,000 miles it has never once let me down. In fact it has cost me less to run than any car I've owned.

On a trip to the Nürburgring last year it ran at over 160mph on the derestricted Autobahn several times with ease and reached 177mph on one section. Four laps of the Ring and a cruise home and the average fuel consumption was 28mpg! Combine that with servicing costs of approx £200 a year (so far no problems), low tax and cheap spares.

My car is now approaching ten years old and the interior looks like new; the bodywork is pristine (even though it is left outdoors). I had been thinking about replacing it, possibly with a 996 GT3, but I reckon that would be more of a compromise. An Aston Vantage would cost more to run and offer no performance gain. I had a BMW E39 M5 and it was nowhere near as enjoyable.

What about a newer 997? Well I now actually prefer the look of the gen 2 996. It's so lithe and lean: even Lightning McQueen chose a 996 to be his girlfriend! The 996 also retains some 911 quirks, which make it more appealing.

In the end I couldn't think of anything to replace it, so I bought a boyhood fantasy, a BMW 635 CSI, as a second car to cruise around in and kept the 996. So my advice to Porter is think again about the 996 gen 2: you may have overlooked the bargain of the century.

Paul Lewis

Mixed-up metals

In your Ferrari V12s test (*evo* 169), Jethro Bovingdon comments about the evocative details, including the 'steel wheels and knock-off spinners of the 275 GTB'. I would remind Mr Bovingdon that Ferrari has never used a steel wheel on any model, except perhaps as an emergency spare. The founders of Campagnolo, Cromodora and Borrani must be shuddering in their graves!

Max Fejer



Left: Porter's 911 fantasy has him driving a 997, but has he missed a greater bargain? Paul Lewis ('Porter's Porsche') thinks so

FROM THE FORUMS: THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY



Maserati Mistral Spyder: £9500 in the mid-'80s, at least ten times as much today...

p7ulg: In the mid eighties I came across a Maserati Mistral Spyder (very similar to the one in the photo) for sale for £9500. To this day I regret not having bought it. Have you ever had the chance of something special which you now regret not buying?

Mike Rainbird: I got offered my mate's 3dr Cosworth around 8 years ago for £7K, but I talked him into keeping it – the exact same car has recently been valued at £18K...

N: Back when I was not driving, I looked into importing an E30 M3 for £7-8K and was put off...

Tim: Yes, a mint 964RS in Guards Red I was offered for £24K back in 2001. I bought a Boxster S instead.

Duncs500: That's got to take some beating!

GraniteV8: Mine was a Lotus Carlton, up for £11K, relatively low mileage, had the bellhousing modification done, and was rust-free as it was owned by a bodyshop manager. The same car is £18K now.

NotoriousREV: AE86s when they were cheap, E30 M3s when they were £8K, Renault 5 Turbo 2 for £13K.

Jimmy Choo: XJR when I had money before sinking every penny into the house.

Mik: Mk2 Escort 1600 Mexico for about £600. Lotus Sunbeam for a couple of grand.

Audio_Chris: A yellow 964RS for £27K in 2001.

Rich B: E30 M3s got down to the £4-5K mark.

Marston: A Fulvia Safari that had been lovingly nut and bolt restored by a Lancia specialist I knew well. He wanted it to go to a good home for not much over £4K. I had the cash, but no garage and was living in a city. I was an idiot. I should have just sucked up the cost of putting it into storage.

ukpete: Casio a168wa for £15. :-)

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SECOND COMING

*The successor to Pagani's much-lauded Zonda is finally here, complete with 720bhp, twin-turbo V12 and active aero. Join **Jethro Bovingdon** as he becomes the first journalist to drive the all-new Huayra*







oosebumps. That's what separates the outrageously brilliant from the merely excellent. Drive a GT3 RS and you'll get them; a 458 serves them up before you even start the engine, a Clio Cup yumping over the kerbs at the top of Eau Rouge makes you feel like you're plugged into the electricity mains... And the Zonda? Well, the first time I drove one there were goosebumps on goosebumps. That wailing AMG V12, the gorgeous feedback and effortlessness of the steering, the sheer tactility of the surroundings and the sense that inertia had ceased to exist as soon as I pulled that flyweight carbonfibre door shut. The Zonda compressed time, not just in the way it accelerated, but the time from input to output. You steered, it turned – instantly. You brushed the throttle and another 2000rpm appeared on the dial – instantly. You braked... well, you get



Top: Bovingdon gets behind the wheel of the Huayra – the first journalist to do so. Above: car's flanks bear the signature of its creator, Horacio Pagani

the picture. The Zonda looked like a spaceship and seemed to dart joyously around as if powered by some sort of alien technology. It was, and remains, an extraordinary machine. From nowhere, we had a new supercar hero.

That was 2001 and the Zonda has since stood toe-to-toe with Ferrari's Enzo, Porsche's Carrera GT and even the mighty Bugatti Veyron. It made the Ferrari feel cheap, the Porsche unnecessarily highly strung, and it outmanoeuvred the Veyron even if it couldn't live with its bruising performance. Even in 2012 the Zonda is the benchmark supercar, its evolution leading from the 389bhp C12 to the remarkable 760RS that we drove just a couple of months ago. Of course you know all of this: you know your F Roadster Clubsport from your Cinque, your R from your HH. But it's worth the recap, for when you look at the incredible impact and staying power of the Zonda formula



'THE CABIN IS A LEATHER, CARBONFIBRE AND ALUMINIUM COCOON OF OBSESSION'

you start to understand the weight of expectation on the Huayra (say 'Why-ra' and the boys in the factory will be happy, even if Horacio Pagani himself favours a guttural 'Gwhy-ra'). Imagine the magical qualities of all your favourite albums rolled into one cohesive whole. That was the Zonda, and the Huayra is the Difficult Second Album from hell.

It looks good. I know, I know... you're not sure about the slightly guppy face, right? It's not my favourite view either, but in the raw the Huayra is jaw-dropping and just gets better the longer you stare at it. Those elegant teardrop wing mirrors, the head-swirling rims with spokes that get progressively more twisted, the lines that flow like honey from front to rear and finish in exquisitely bold shapes, the way the body seems stretched tight over its carbon-titanium chassis like an Adrian Newey F1 car. Before I landed in Bologna and took the



Top: interior can be trimmed to owner's spec, with a choice of colours and finishes.

Above: headlight units are new and incorporate sidelights and indicators

short drive to Pagani's temple to carbonfibre I was firmly of the opinion that the Huayra looked a bit awkward and that I preferred the Zonda, but within a day the new car just seemed so much more modern, and more exciting too. Trust me, you'll love the Huayra soon and, of course, it could only be a Pagani. Allow Horacio to talk you through the detail of the Huayra (set aside two days for this) and you'll want to adopt Greece's financial strategy. What's 845,000 euros plus local taxes – let's call it £820,000 on the road – when Europe is already in for trillions? I'm sure the Germans will bail me out if I ask nicely.

So you flick a delicate catch and the huge door hisses up, gullwing-style. The strut is only just strong enough to take the door on its journey and asks a bit of effort from you. I love that. Wouldn't want a huge, musclebound strut – too heavy. The Huayra is 1350kg dry. In this left-hand-drive car you step into



'THE LIGHT, COMPACT DRIVETRAIN CREATES A SUPREME
ABILITY TO CHANGE DIRECTION EVEN WHEN UNDER
FULL ATTACK FROM THE MIGHT OF THE V12'



the footwell with your right foot, reach across your chest with your right hand to grab the loop of leather. Now sit down and pull the door down as you do so. You're in. Inside a leather, carbonfibre and aluminium cocoon of obsession, every detail agonised over and beautifully thought out, every material used sympathetically and expertly integrated into this stunning sculpture. The driving position is superb. I won't bore you with the details simply because there are too many to list – so many it's almost overwhelming. Just look at the pictures and soak in the madness of it all. Some will surely find it all a bit too much, but even the most cynical will struggle not to smile and coo if they get a chance to sit inside a Huayra. It's pure theatre.

All this stuff was never in doubt. Horacio Pagani is an engineer and connoisseur, and the Huayra is a labour of love that's been in the making since 2003. It was always going to be a mid-engined Fabergé egg, fastidious and flamboyant. But there are bigger questions for people who read this magazine. Questions like can a 6-litre V12 with forced induction ever match the noise, throttle response and sheer drama of the old naturally aspirated 7.3-litre motor? Can Pagani's young test driver, Davide Testi, recreate the supple, subtle brilliance that his legendary predecessor, Loris Biscocchi, poured into the Zonda like whipped cream? Can lightning strike twice? The Futa and Raticosa passes, stomping ground of Ferrari and Lamborghini test drivers since the dawn of the breed, are where we find out.

PULL THE ALUMINIUM, Huayra-shaped key apart like you might a car-shaped USB stick, slot it into the centre console below a row of slender oval switches and twist. The metal-faced dials light up in blue and the needles swing around their arcs before resetting at zero. Twist again and the starter whirs before the twin-turbocharged AMG V12 catches with a resounding *Boom!* The engine noise is deep and saw-toothed. Blip the throttle and it crackles like a racer. The early Zondas used to wrap you up in a warm, sonorous howl, the Huayra's anger rather sets you on edge. It's like you're being tapped on the shoulder and reminded that this rear-wheel-drive supercar has 720bhp and 737lb ft of torque. Incredibly, AMG has more staff working solely on Huayra engines (67) than are actually employed at Pagani HQ. It's taken a huge amount of time and effort, but Davide Testi suggests that the twin-turbo engine is now every bit as responsive as the masterful normally aspirated motor it replaces.

Behind the V12 there's an Xtrac seven-speed automated-manual gearbox. It's a single-clutch set-up as Pagani couldn't

Right: even the speakers for the sound system are a work of art. Opposite page, bottom: titanium centre-locking wheel nuts and the elaborate drive selector (note Huayra-shaped key in the dash)



bear the thought of a heavy twin-clutch arrangement sat at the rear of the car. It weighs just 96kg and by Pagani's reckoning a twin-clutch unit capable of handling 737lb ft would be closer to 200kg. Furthermore it's mounted transversely to improve the weight distribution and create a safer, more manageable car at the limit. This was a key consideration right from the start of the project. Horacio admits that when the Enzo, Carrera GT and Veyron arrived in short succession he was concerned that his tiny company wouldn't be able to compete. However, when he drove them he felt more confident. He's a car nut (look in his lock-up and you'll find a Gulf-liveried Ford GT nestled closely beside a lovely E-type Roadster) and loved each in its own way, but quickly identified the Carrera GT as the most impressive. 'It is a beautiful car and an incredible piece of engineering,' he beams. 'However, it is not an easy car to drive. It is very challenging at the limit. We wanted something with a little more understeer and a more progressive balance.'

From an engineering point of view, the transverse single-clutch 'box is the optimum set-up, then. However, pulling back the intricate gear selector (67 parts aimed at creating a mechanical feel when in reality it simply connects a solenoid) and waiting to hear the distant thunk of first gear engaging, I can't help wondering if Ferrari and Bugatti owners might find the ponderous low-speed rigmarole slightly absurd. Tickling the throttle gets the Huayra rolling but you do feel like you're second-guessing when the clutch will fully release, so immediately a barrier is put between you and the car. Remember that ability to compress time? Well here it feels

Left and below: Huayra's control flaps (two at the front, two at the rear) lift up to help increase stability; they operate together in a straight line and independently in corners; under braking they extend fully for maximum drag





A silver Lotus Evija is shown from a rear three-quarter view, driving on a winding asphalt road. The car's distinctive features, such as its three circular taillights and the 'Z' logo on the rear wing, are visible. The background consists of a blurred green forest, indicating high speed. The car is positioned on the left side of the frame, with the road curving towards the right.

'YOUR LEGS GO LIGHT AND YOUR HEAD
IS PRESSED HARD AGAINST THE SEAT.
"VIOLENT" IS THE BEST WORD TO SUM UP
A TRIP FROM 1500 TO 6500RPM'



like you're waiting for the Huayra to catch up. Pulling out of a junction across traffic can be a nerve-jangling affair.

Fortunately that hesitancy is short-lived and, once above walking pace, the Huayra delivers rapid, decisive shifts. Within 100 yards you'll have hit the ESC button (which resides on the steering wheel and alters not just the level of electronic stability control that its initials might suggest, but also throttle response and gearbox behaviour) to switch from Auto mode to Comfort so you can use the smooth, wheel-mounted paddles for total control. You'll have noticed that familiar Zonda suppleness, too. When Horacio had been talking about understeer and useability I confess I was rather worried that the Huayra might feel a little too soft and cuddly, but actually it's perfectly judged – comfortable but with an underlying control and firmness so you know you're in something very serious indeed. However, pootling around below 3000rpm, gearbox snapping between ratios with a sweet *pfiff*, the Huayra feels refined and effortless. Better still, the throttle response – even driven gingerly and well below where you'd expect the turbochargers to be working – is superb. If somebody told you the Huayra was normally aspired you'd be hard-pressed to dispute it.

Unless, that is, you've cracked down the windows a couple of centimetres. Suddenly the deep industrial gargling is entirely subsumed by the swirl and huffs of the intake system and the chirps and chatter of the turbos. The sheer volume of air this engine requires suddenly feels almost tangible. It's rather wonderful to feel the insistent forces it provides and simultaneously hear it sucking that performance from fresh air. But unlike that definitive turbocharged supercar, the Ferrari F40, there's no off-boost lethargy nor a fairground spike of runaway power. In fact the delivery is genuinely progressive.

Progressive but savage. My god it goes. The road up to the Futa is a string of villages with just a few hundred yards between them, but it's enough to feel the engine surge up to 6500rpm in second. Quite how the rear 335/30 ZR20 P Zeros cope with the torque is beyond me, but they are absolutely hooked-up and the result is that your legs go light and your head is held and pressed hard against the seat. 'Violent' is the best word to sum up a trip from 1500 to 6500rpm in one gear.

As the pass winds up into the trees and the villages dwindle in number and frequency, I get to enjoy the delivery for sustained

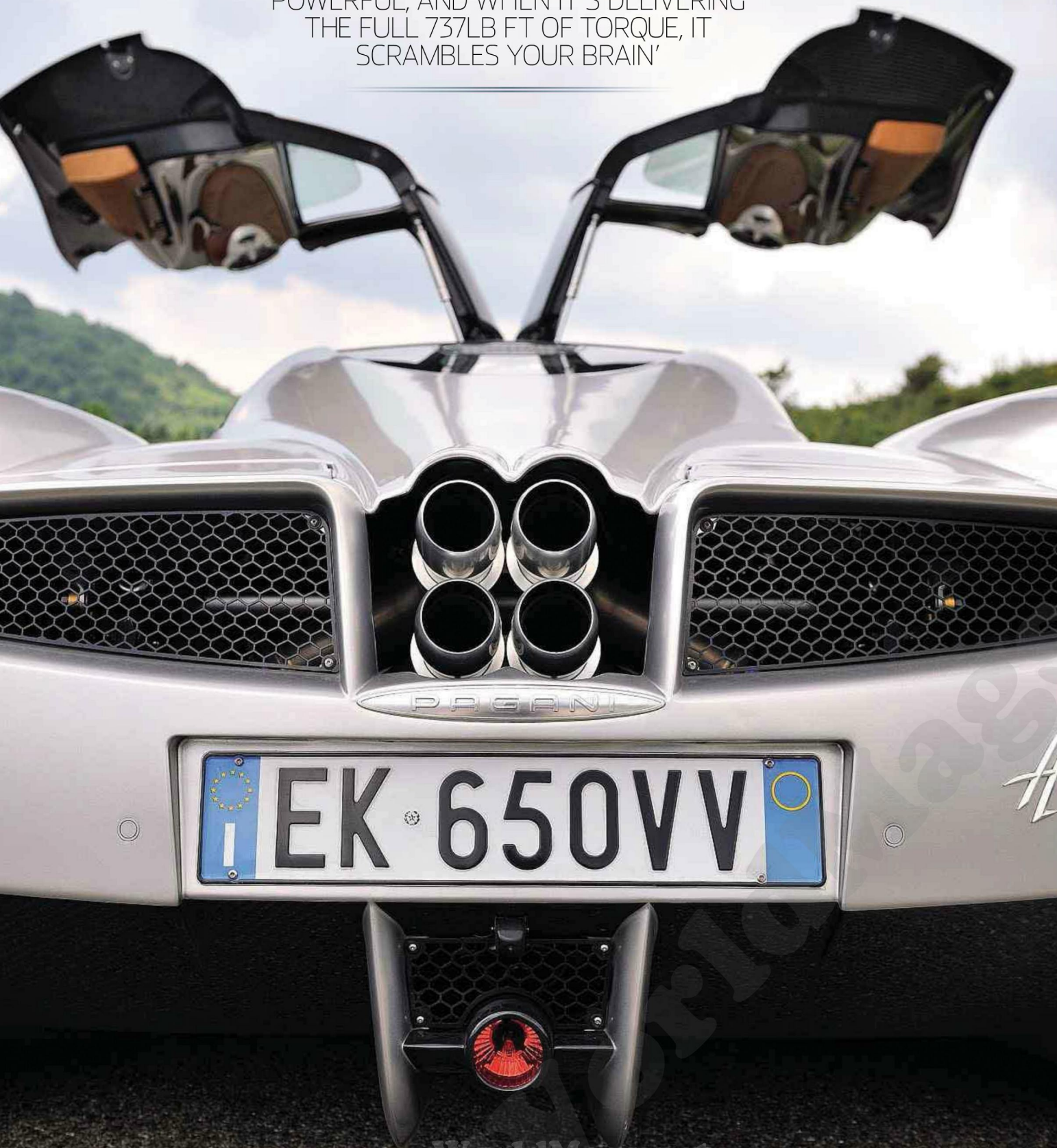


Above: seats are similar to those found in the Zonda Cinque. Right: rear section of bodywork is painted on this car, but expect to see many finished in lacquered carbonfibre

periods and feel the carbon-ceramic brakes bite hard, the much-talked-about active aero wings lifting to increase drag and the suspension actively compensating before any destabilising dive sets in. What's blindingly obvious is that the transverse-mounted 'box and the general commitment to keeping mass to a minimum has once again paid dividends. But the engine is just phenomenally powerful and when it's delivering the full 737lb ft of torque, it scrambles your brain. This is the sort of performance that doesn't dull even with prolonged exposure.

Perhaps more impressive is that the chassis feels so able to soak it up. The traction is truly extraordinary and the light, compact drivetrain creates a supreme ability to change direction even when under full attack from the might of the V12. Such is the Huayra's stability that very quickly you use Sport mode as the default setting. This reduces shift times to a scarcely believable 20 milliseconds, further improves throttle response and gives the traction and stability control systems a much better sense of humour. In fact it gives all the freedom you'd ever need on the road and on occasion those monster Pirellis fizz demonically over big crests, requiring nothing more than a gentle correction that feels like the most natural thing in the world.

'THE ENGINE IS JUST PHENOMENALLY
POWERFUL, AND WHEN IT'S DELIVERING
THE FULL 737LB FT OF TORQUE, IT
SCRAMBLES YOUR BRAIN'



Futa blends into Raticosa and then, just by the handy Chalet Raticosa, the road splits. Dive left onto the SP58 and you're on your own. The bikers all seem to stay on the main passes, so this little spit of road that runs along a high ridge and then eventually down to a near-deserted village is empty. We take a little breather at the Chalet for a sandwich and a hit of espresso. Test driver Davide joins the *evo* team of myself, Harry Metcalfe, photographer Dean Smith and the hideously attired video ace Sam Riley. Davide asks what I think...

I haven't really thought much at all. I've just tried to keep £820,000-worth of carbonfibre and titanium out of the undergrowth and done my best to keep up with that engine. So I give it some thought. I've already grown to love the snap of the shift, which isn't brutal like an Aventador's but feels just as quick and much more enjoyable. It really has the feel of a pneumatically actuated race 'box. Shame it's a bit creaky at low speeds. I also love the fury of the engine and the spooky traction. I wish the steering was a little quicker and a fair bit lighter – why

go to such lengths to create a lightweight car and hide its agility with a heavy rack? Davide admits he feels the same and prefers the most aggressive of the three steering racks that are offered (our test car has the middle option). I wish the ceramics had that instant bite that only Porsche seems to nail. The Huayra's brakes are much closer in feel to a Ferrari's, with a longer pedal travel and a coarse, grainy feel that suddenly goes heavy and dead as they get really hot. But above all I love the way the Huayra provides all the tools to use 720bhp pretty much at will.

I'm relieved that nearly everything is either good or great. Mainly because Davide looks like he could rip my head off with one hand. I want to tell him that the way the Huayra's stability liberates you to really work the chassis, engine and brakes to their maximum even on a narrow, unpredictable road reminds me very much of an Audi R8. However, maybe he wouldn't like the comparison. I mentally note to save that observation for print, by which time there'll be a good 800 miles between Davide and me. The comparison is valid though, and I couldn't

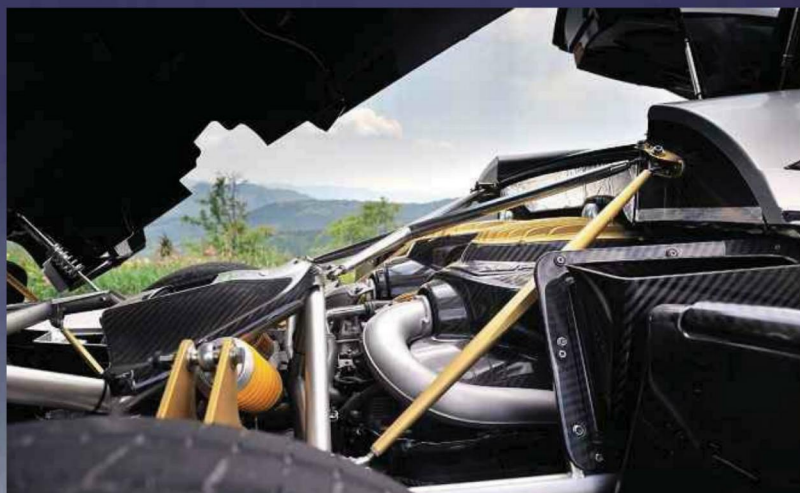
Below: Bovingdon takes a brave pill and hangs the Huayra's tail out; Corsa tyres are available if you want more grip. Far right: the mid-mounted V12; note the huge carbon air intake on the right



be happier that a rear-drive 720bhp Pagani can feel as secure but also as indulgent as the fabulously balanced R8. It breeds confidence and makes 720bhp exploitable. There's just one thing missing so far. Those goosebumps.

THIS IS INDISPUTABLY the road to go looking for them. And this is the moment I've been dreading and looking forward to in equal measure. Dean, absolutely deadpan, delivers the photographer's most evil line: 'Do you want to have a quick run up and down to see which corner works?' Erm, I think he means for an oversteer shot. 'You know this thing is worth nearly a million quid?' I offer, helplessly. 'Better make sure it's the right corner then,' says Dean.

There's very little that concentrates the mind like flicking a Huayra's ESC button from Comfort to Sport, which makes the central display turn red, presumably for danger, and then bringing yourself to hold the button down for a few more seconds until the display reads 'ESC Off'. Somewhere in an



'THE HUAYRA MIGHT SEEM LIKE A PUSSYCAT MUCH OF THE TIME, BUT TAKE ANY LIBERTIES WITH IT AND IT'S STILL LIABLE TO BITE YOU'



insurance company office in the UK an alarm sounds furiously and people whimper. Even Harry retreats into our Focus hire car and buries his thoughts in his iPhone with a rueful, 'Oh heck? I tell myself it's just a car and go corner-hunting.

For the first mile or two I do what I always do when stability systems are disengaged: drive more slowly. Suddenly I'm on high alert, tense and clumsy. But soon the Huayra's natural stability reassures my senses and pretty soon I'm driving above and beyond where I've been before. That settling understeer is still present, but drive hard into it and the front tyres push back; they've found their slip angle and they're staying with it. Snap from one direction to another and the Huayra responds quickly, shrugging off inertia in the best Zonda tradition, and that mild understeer keeps the rear in line and driving hard. I dare to wonder if a 224mph car should feel so benign.

A blind right, a few too many revs and the Huayra snaps sideways and I'm pointing at a steep grass verge for maybe a quarter of a second. When I open my eyes again I'm pointing straight, so I just pull another gear and give the V12 its head all over again. Phwoar. Scary. Deliciously, heart-thumping scary.

That's more like it. The Huayra might seem like a pussycat much of the time, but take any liberties with it and it's still liable to bite you. Face flushed, heart BPM bouncing off the rev limiter, limbs heavy with adrenalin – not many cars can provide moments like these.

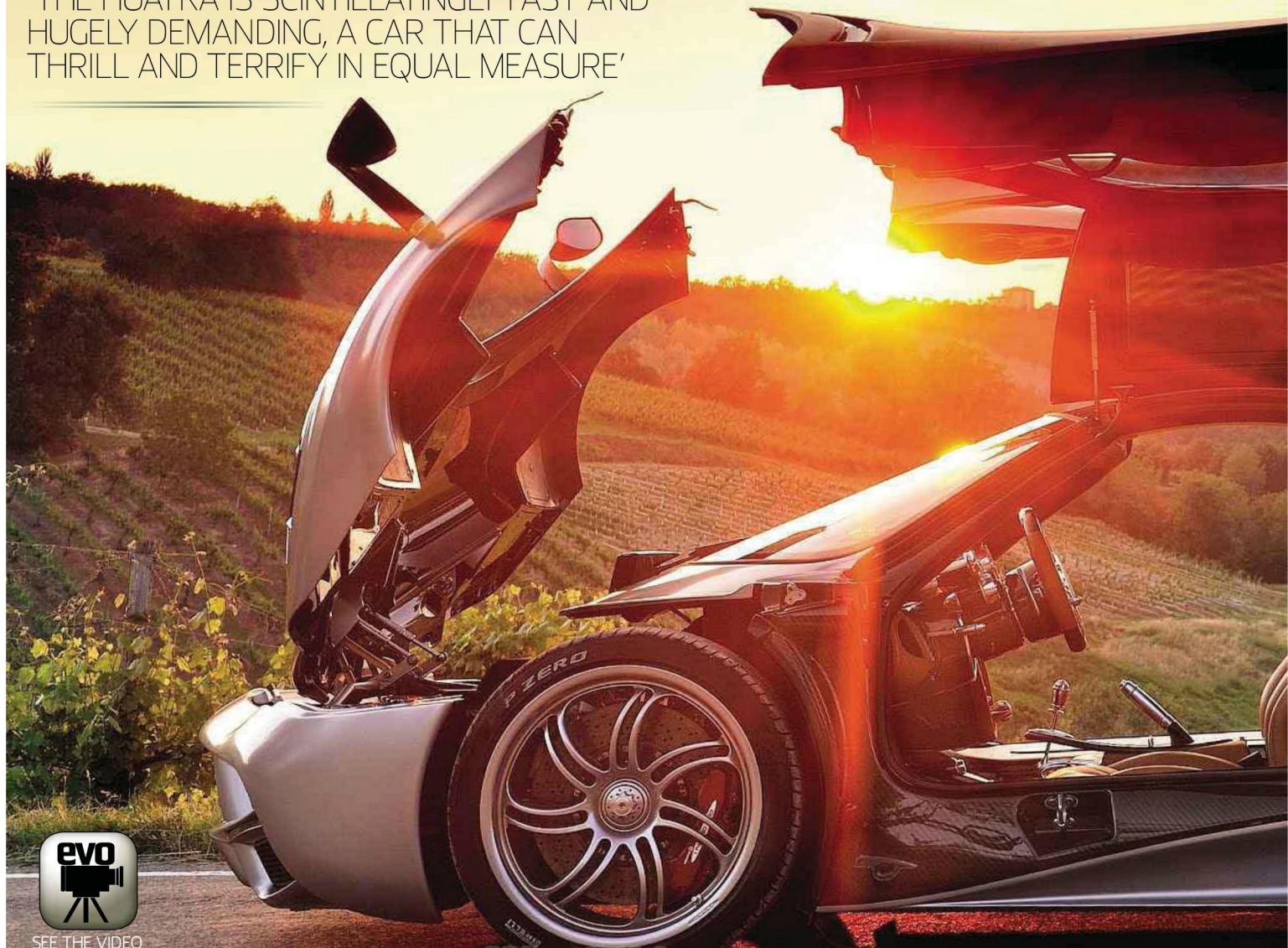
It's the payback for that immense traction: when the rear tyres finally cry enough, the V12 is right in the crazy part of its power curve and wheelspin builds in a wicked flare. It's testament to the chassis' inherent balance that this doesn't immediately spin the Huayra around. In fact although respect is most definitely due, the Huayra remains tactile and composed even beyond the limit. You won't ever want to pull wild oversteer slides on a narrow mountain pass but you can tweak and tease the car. And when you start to provoke this monstrously fast car on corner exits and spin the rear tyres up just as the road straightens, you know that Davide has created something of a masterpiece. You wouldn't – couldn't – drive a Carrera GT like this. Dean gets his shot, Harry is relieved, alarm bells stop ringing in Northants and Davide looks happy. Phew, can we go home now?

We can but we don't. We're an hour or so from the airport



Above: button for the launch control feature sits above the carbonfibre rear-view mirror. Right: in typical AMG fashion, the V12 bears the signature of the man who built it

'THE HUAYRA IS SCINTILLATINGLY FAST AND HUGELY DEMANDING, A CAR THAT CAN THRILL AND TERRIFY IN EQUAL MEASURE'



SEE THE VIDEO
AT WWW.EVO.CO.UK



and this is Italy, so we assume arriving about ten minutes before the plane is due to depart will be plenty. That leaves us another hour or so to get under the skin of this extraordinary car. Some owners will only ever feel its incredible stability, the ease with which it lets the driver experience massive performance with a relaxing effortlessness. However, the Huayra is more than a Zonda refined and sanitised. It's a car with its own personality – or rather its own split personality. Beyond the refinement and ease of use is a demon with one eye open waiting for its turn, a car that is scintillatingly fast and hugely demanding, a car that can thrill and terrify in equal measure, a supercar in every sense of the word.

The gearbox isn't perfect, a little of the Zonda's steering feel has been lost and some people will suggest that a twin-turbocharged engine will never hold the romance nor offer the response of a huge, normally aspirated V12. They might even have a point. But when that engine is hurling you into the sunset, hitting you again and again with all its might, you won't care a damn. You might even be too wired to notice those goosebumps, but they're present and correct. I've still got them now.

SPECIFICATION

PAGANI HUAYRA

Engine V12, 5980cc, twin-turbo

Power 720bhp @ 5800rpm

Torque 737lb ft @ 2250-4500rpm

Transmission Seven-speed automated manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, ESP

Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, active dampers, anti-roll bar

Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, active dampers, anti-roll bar

Brakes Vented and cross-drilled carbon-ceramic discs, ABS

Wheels 19in front, 20in rear

Tyres 255/35 ZR19 front, 335/30 ZR20 rear

Weight (dry) 1350kg

Power-to-weight 542bhp/ton

0-62mph 3.3sec (claimed)

Top speed 224mph (claimed)

Basic price c£820,000

On sale Now

evo RATING ★★★★★



SACRÉ BLUR!

*What happens when you cross an open-top Bugatti Veyron with the 1183bhp Veyron Super Sport? You get the the world's fastest roadster. **Nick Trott** drives the Grand Sport Vitesse*

We are greeted in Spain by blistering temperatures. Two Veyron Grand Sport Vitesse sit together at our meeting point – a situation unlikely to be repeated any time soon. They glisten in the sweaty heat, light bouncing off the familiar shape – all French curves and menace.

For some reason, perhaps intimidation, you feel the urge to crouch down and view it at a lower angle. Then you realise that you are effectively kneeling in front of the car, head bowed.

And for good reason. This is the Bugatti Veyron. Bona fide motoring royalty. Rare, expensive, genre-creating, face-altering and jaw-dropping. To see one on the road elicits the same response as a birdwatcher who's just caught a glimpse of a lesser spotted tit. Today, the only lesser spotted tit will be me if I damage this car.

The Grand Sport Vitesse we're about to drive is the open-top version of the Super Sport – the fastest car in the world, the machine that hit 268mph during top-speed trials, the car that cost nearly 2million euros plus local taxes (payable by bank transfer, no cash). The Super Sport's engine, we hear, has achieved 3000bhp on a dyno, but in the road car, due to the losses generated by the gearbox, cooling and necessary peripherals, it – and thus the Vitesse – produces a piffling 1183bhp at 6400rpm.

Unlike the Super Sport, the Vitesse has two colossal nostrils mounted either side of the open engine area to feed the 8-litre, 16-cylinder engine. Air simply would not find its way over an open top and into the NACA-type ducts on the smooth engine cover found on the Super Sport. Interestingly, these giant nostrils also serve as part of the roll-protection structure.

With four larger turbochargers come new intercoolers and an ECU remap. This results in a near-200bhp increase over the standard Veyron and,



*'THANKS TO THE ABSENCE OF THE TARGA PANEL
AND AN ENGINE COVER, YOU FEEL VIRTUALLY
INSIDE THIS FIERCE POWERTRAIN'*





thanks to reduced back pressure, the overall fuel consumption figure – we're told – is improved.

The regular Veyron's four-wheel-drive system is retained, with a Haldex diff acting as choreographer for the immense power and torque. The ESP has been reconfigured and kicks in a little later on corner exit to 'provide more dynamic performance in these situations'. Never has press information gone to such lengths to avoid the word 'oversteer'.

The Vitesse is suspended via a revised coilover set-up with remote gas reservoirs, adjustable – if requested – by the factory. These new coilovers were a godsend, according to Bugatti test driver Loris Biccocchi, as they allowed the careful fine tuning required to ensure the Vitesse can contain the forces generated by the tweaked engine, the immense tyres (365-section at the rear) and the carbon-ceramic brakes. What kind of forces? 1.4G lateral, 1.2G longitudinal and 17.6G intestinal...

The other key changes over the Super Sport are, of course, the removable targa roof panel, added layers of carbonfibre in the tub to increase stiffness and a damping device in the steering wheel to counteract increased vibrations caused by the open top. The steering damping was a specific request by Wolfgang Dürheimer – Bugatti CEO during the Vitesse's development, now head of Audi R&D – who demanded that the car should remain refined and as free as possible from scuttle shake.

At 1990kg (152kg more than the Super Sport) the Vitesse is not light. Its engine and transmission are nearly 650kg alone, an incredible 36kg of which is oil. Every bolt on the car is titanium, saving 35kg, but speaking to a Bugatti engineer on the quiet it's clear weight is still the one area where improvements could be made: 'The best and lightest materials were used during the original development of the car – but this was nearly ten years ago and things have moved on.'



Left: editor Trott gets to grips with the 1183bhp Vitesse – roof off, of course

Aerodynamics caused a few problems, as you'd expect from an open-top car that can reach a top speed of 255mph. Says Veyron head of engineering Stephen Neumann, completely deadpan: 'The Vitesse has a very sensitive aeromap.' The roofless shape creates an aeroplane-wing effect, but this is neutralised by the revised rear diffuser and the tall, automatically deploying spoiler that hits a maximum of 27 degrees in Handling mode and 55 degrees when braking. If you ever get the chance to ask a Veyron owner to press the spoiler button, take it. It's a mesmerising sight – a theatre of multiple precise movements as it finds its angle of attack or retracts in a series of tiny steps back into the flush position.

Time to dry my hands on my trousers and press the central locking release. The carbon door opens, feeling light with a precise swing on its hinges. I sink down into the thin carbon seat and Biccocchi, watching carefully, thanks me for taking care not to scuff the leather on the tall sill. This Vitesse has 100,000 euros' worth of clear-coat blue finish on the exterior carbon, which sparkles iridescent like fish scales in the bright Barcelona sun. This extraordinary material abounds inside too, where the fit and finish is – and I rarely use this word in a review – perfect.

You feel instantly at ease in here. This is not an old-school supercar; you are not forced to dislocate your major joints

BUGATTI VEYRON
GRAND SPORT VITESSE



to operate it. Shoulder and elbow room are ample, the wheel rests nicely to hand, visibility is excellent and the dials are clear and legible. Then you notice the power dial and the final number on the sweep (1200 PS) and your heart skips a beat.

Key in, power button pressed, a helicopter-whirl of starter motor and – *boom!* – you're introduced to the single most guttural, tectonic, cacophonous idle note of any car on the planet. And thanks to the absence of the targa panel and an engine cover, you feel virtually inside this fierce powertrain.

Blip the throttle pedal to get a feel for the response and new noises join the idle orchestra: whirrs and whistles layered above a *bup-bup-bup* of the pistons as they punch gases prior to ignition. There's no mistaking it – the noise is unmelodious. Not without merit, just not nape-ticklingly musical. More Metallica than Mozart.

Nudge the gear selector to the right, check that Loris is happy, release the electronic parking brake. As you move off, the car feels light, the 1106lb ft of torque easily overwhelming the weight. Indeed, even with no throttle application, the

Vitesse, of course, is French for 'speed'; fittingly, 0-62mph takes a claimed 2.6sec (just 0.1sec slower than the Super Sport); top speed is 255mph

Veyron pulls strongly away from rest.

Look around the cockpit, scan the mirrors, wriggle a little lower in the seat and you suddenly realise that this is a pussycat to drive. Manoeuvring is easy, judging the dimensions simple – hell, even negotiating large speed bumps is a cinch. Then you notice a gap in the traffic ahead, and perhaps lulled into a false sense of security you push the throttle pedal as hard as you dare and... and... and...

The engine note turns angry, like a mild breeze becoming tornadic. Then as the turbo lag bleeds away, the car erupts in a fury of surging acceleration. You feel light-headed and mildly disorientated. Spookily, your feet and legs levitate momentarily and your solar plexus compresses. Then you catch a glimpse of the power dial and realise you've 'only' used 700 of the 1200 metric horses available. So you try again.

This time you swear. Loudly. You invoke all manner of religious figures, from Jesus to Yoda, and you back off, panting with an excess of adrenalin. The engine note cuts instantly from a supermassive industrial bellow to a fit of sneezes and chuffs and descending drones, and Loris looks over



'THE CAR ERUPTS IN A FURY OF SURGING ACCELERATION AND YOU FEEL LIGHT-HEADED AND MILDLY DISORIENTATED'

and quietly says, 'Twelve 'undred'. Yes!

We're well out of town now, on a glorious piece of road near Bisbal, and those first two stabs at acceleration have revealed three key things. Firstly, there is a surprising level of turbo lag. Secondly, the push in your back seems to increase with speed. Finally, when you release the full 1183bhp in a low gear you instinctively apply a quarter turn of lock to keep the car on the road.

The seven-speed dual-clutch transmission is remarkable. Actuated by beautifully light billet paddles on the back of the steering wheel, it neither shunts nor hunts at low speeds and never does it achieve anything other than whip-crack upshifts and perfect rev-matching on downshifts. And here's a thing – not once do I yearn for a manual. Too much to do; too much to see; too great a bombardment of superaccelerated information.

Now we're into **evo** territory – twists, switchbacks, long straights, gradients, cambers and little traffic. Inevitably, you work the brakes hard in a Veyron, but they don't fade, they remain consistent and the pedal feel and return pressure



Top: this Vitesse has a costly 'blue carbon' finish. Above: dials are easy to read – note the power gauge on the left. Above right: gearbox is a dual-clutcher. Left: headlights have neat daytime running light strips.

Below: umbrella-like soft-top can be used if it rains and you've left your hard-top at home; it's only good up to 80mph, though



BUGATTI VEYRON GRAND SPORT VITESSE



Right: angle of the rear wing changes for each drive mode (Standard, Handling or Top Speed)

is sublime. There's no dead spot, or the sudden glassiness that's often associated with carbon-ceramics, just finely metered control that precisely communicates that crucial moment prior to ABS actuation. It all adds to the Veyron's essential driveability – and boosts your confidence in the car significantly. It's a curious characteristic of the Veyron Vitesse that you feel ready to push the car into braking zones and through the corners almost immediately. 'Yes, yes – this for me is so good to hear,' says Loris. 'I tried so hard with the *cha-see* to make it easy to drive.'

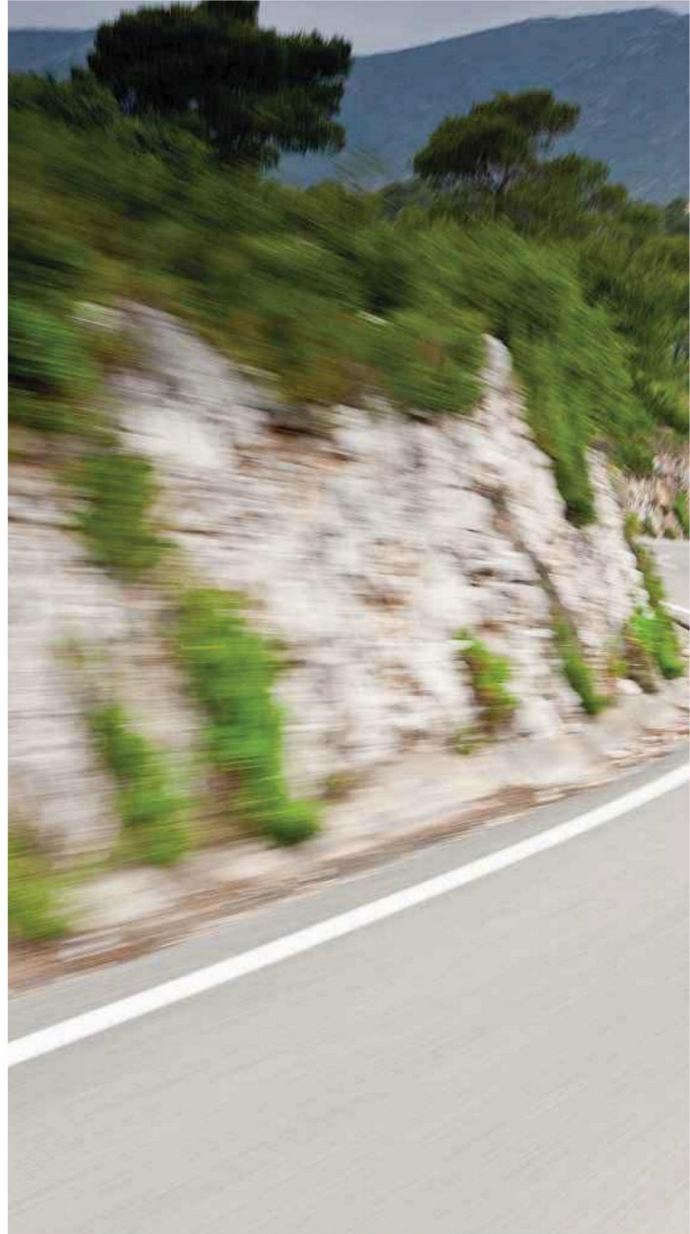
In slower, tighter corners, the steering response is light, quick, with decent feel, but when the corners open out and you're pushing harder, the feel erodes. While you acclimatise to this characteristic, you tend to take a few clumsy bites at the corner in an attempt to determine grip levels. And when grip is released, understeer is generated. Curiously, you notice this understeer when you visibly witness your hands applying more lock – rather than via feedback through the steering wheel.

There's little doubt that the understeer has been tuned into the Vitesse rather than tuned out. You feel that there is a better balanced car inside waiting to be released. If it was my Veyron, I'd ask for a day with Loris and some spanners to reassert a more neutral balance.

As you've probably guessed, the Veyron simply isn't a car for indulging in two-turning, two-burning oversteer moments – at least on the road. Undoubtedly, this does narrow the dynamic window and the opportunity for the driver to make the car dance. However, you can drive the Vitesse hard and manipulate the weight by braking late and really hooking into an apex. The temporary stasis mid-corner, created by the turbo lag and understeer, is difficult to negate. With more time, I'd want to practise left-foot braking in order to get on the gas and build the boost during the last phase of braking.

Our time with the Vitesse ends, but not before I've learned that I don't need to drive a coupe Veyron to say that I would like my Bugatti served without its roof. The negative characteristics of open-top cars are barely evident here, but the positives are off the scale – in particular simply being exposed to the incomparable engine and its complex, punishing soundtrack. I can't think of another vehicle on the planet to compare it to... a P-51 without a canopy perhaps?

The Vitesse will undoubtedly feed the Veyron-hating trolls out there. It is expensive (around £1.55million before options). It is too fast for the road. To



'I CAN'T THINK OF ANOTHER VEHICLE ON THE PLANET TO COMPARE

IN-GEAR MAX SPEEDS

GEAR	SPEED
1ST	65MPH
2ND	92MPH
3RD	122MPH
4TH	156MPH
5TH	194MPH
6TH	234MPH
7TH	255MPH

Above: peak speeds in each gear show the incredible reach of the Vitesse's ratios – 2nd is plenty to break the highest UK speed limit





THE VEYRON VITESSE TO... A P-51 WITHOUT A CANOPY PERHAPS?'

insure it, service it, refuel it and store it takes commitment and cash. However, the Veyron matches colossal performance and price with colossal engineering integrity – perhaps not ultimate engineering purity and creativity, but a feeling of indomitability. It feels neither fragile nor temperamental, and after two days in searing heat, asking it to perform fast runs, followed by long periods of idle, followed by numerous three-point turns for photography, followed by intense periods when your writer couldn't help himself, it suffered not a single hiccup.

The people who buy these cars appreciate such things, just as they appreciate the personal relationship with the factory that Bugatti tries so hard to cultivate. Some customers aren't proper drivers and thus their enjoyment is delivered by the aura

this car exudes. If they invest time with Loris and learn to push their Veyron, they will discover that they are missing out, because this *is* a drivers' car. Not to the same scintillating degree as a Carrera GT or a Zonda or an Enzo – but a car that presents its own definition of what constitutes driving thrills and impales it.

And here's the thing – most Veyron customers own other supercars anyway. If they want to hear a V12 scream, or push a wooden-topped gearlever around a gate or gorge on automotive jewellery then they simply open another garage door. For them the Veyron offers something else – total performance, driveability, kudos, quality and an overriding sense of indefatigability. And I don't see a problem with that.

Vive la différence. Vive la Vitesse.

SPECIFICATION

VEYRON GRAND SPORT VITESSE

Engine W16, 7993cc, quad-turbo

CO2 539g/km

Power 1183bhp @ 6400rpm

Torque 1106lb ft @ 3000-5000rpm

Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch transmission, four-wheel drive, ESP

Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, active dampers, anti-roll bar

Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, active dampers, anti-roll bar

Brakes Vented and cross-drilled carbon-ceramic discs, 400mm front, 380mm rear, ABS

Tyres 265-680 ZR500A front, 365-710 ZR540A rear

Weight (dry) 1990kg

Power-to-weight 604bhp/ton

0-62mph 2.6sec (claimed)

Top speed 255mph (claimed)

Basic price c£1.55m (€1.65m plus local taxes)

EVO RATING ★★★★★



**2005
EB 16.4**

The original. Its 1000bhp enabled it to smash the world record for the fastest production car, achieving a seemingly unbeatable top speed of 253mph...
300 produced



**2007
PUR SANG**

The first special edition. With a name that's French for 'pure blood', it was painted with a clear lacquer to show off the aluminium and carbonfibre bodywork.
5 produced



**2008
FBG PAR
HERMES**

Inspired by the French fashion house, with a Hermès monogram on the grille and 'H' logos on the wheel centres.
1 produced



**2008
SANG NOIR**

French for 'black blood'. Chrome grille and mirrors aside, the Sang Noir had an all-black exterior finish – paired with a bright orange interior.
15 produced

EVERY VEYRON

*During the seven years it has been in production, Bugatti has launched more than a few different versions of its Veyron, some of them significant, others perhaps a little less so. **Matthew Hayward** identifies them all*



**2008
GRAND SPORT**

A targa-roofed version. Able to hit the same 253mph top speed as the coupe with the roof in place; limited to 229mph without it.
Still in production



**2009
L'EDITION
CENTENAIRE**

Celebrating 100 years of Bugatti. Four cars, each painted in a different iconic Bugatti racing colour – blue, cream, red and green.
4 produced



**2009
BLEU
CENTENAIRE**

Another special centenary model, this time finished in a combination of matt and gloss Bugatti Blue – like the original Type 35 racers.
3 produced



**2010
GRAND SPORT
SANG BLEU**

Special edition of targa-top Grand Sport featured polished aluminium wheels and a blue carbonfibre and diamond-cut exterior finish.
1 produced



2010
**GRAND SPORT
GREY CARBON**

Produced for the 2010 Geneva motor show. Upper body was dark grey carbonfibre, lower areas polished aluminium.
1 produced



2010
**ROYAL DARK
BLUE CARBON**

A second car for the same Geneva show, finished with Royal Dark Blue carbonfibre and Arctic White side panels.
1 produced



2010
**GRAND SPORT
SOLEIL DE NUIT**

Destined for the Middle East, this unique Grand Sport combined polished aluminium accents with metallic blue/black paint.
1 produced



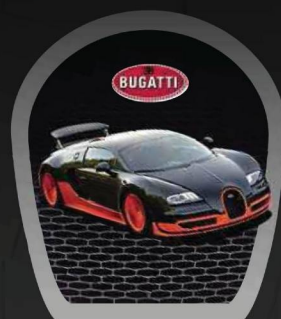
2010
SANG D'ARGENT

Unveiled at the Dubai motor show, this one-off was finished in matte silver and polished aluminium. It had an asking price of \$2.1million.
1 produced



2010
NOCTURNE

Also seen in Dubai, this special edition featured copious amounts of polished aluminium. Asking price was \$2.4million.
5 produced



2010
SUPER SPORT

Upping power to 1183bhp meant a mighty 268mph, enabling the Veyron to reclaim the production car speed record from the SSC Ultimate Aero TT.
30 produced



2011
**GRAND SPORT BY
BIJAN PAKZAD**

The Iranian-born fashion designer collaborated to design this one-off yellow and chrome Veyron just weeks before his death.
1 produced



2011
**GRAND SPORT
MATTE WHITE**

As its name suggests, this one had a matte white paint finish, but with the lower section of the car in blue carbonfibre.
1 produced



2011
**SUPER SPORT
SANG NOIR**

Introduced for customers who didn't like the look of the standard Super Sport. Finished in black – with a bright orange interior.
5 produced



2011
**GRAND SPORT
L'OR BLANC**

Collaboration with porcelain maker KPM. Badges and fuel and oil caps were all made from – you guessed it – porcelain.
1 produced



2011
**GRAND SPORT
RED EDITION**

Another 'special edition' that amounts to little more than a smart paint job. Finished in red with a red interior and red wheels.
1 produced



2011
**SUPER SPORT
BLACK CARBON**

Built for a customer in China. Finished in clear-coat to show the carbonfibre body. Combined with a white leather interior.
1 produced



2011
**GRAND SPORT
MIDDLE EAST**

The three different 'Middle East Edition' cars were unveiled at the 2011 Dubai motor show. Prices from £1.4million.
3 produced



2012
**GRAND SPORT
VITESSE**

Combining the upgraded 1183bhp Super Sport engine with the targa-topped body makes this the world's fastest convertible. Still in production



2012
**GRAND SPORT
WEI LONG**

Unveiled at the Beijing show, this model is based on the lower-powered Grand Sport and features porcelain dragon reliefs.
1 produced



SUPERCARS:

The Huayra and Veyron Vitesse represent the pinnacle of today's supercars, but what does the next

McLAREN 'P12' v FERRARI 'ENZO'

If you thought the Ferrari 458 versus McLaren MP4-12C grudge match was bloody, just wait until you see these two new hypercar titans lock horns next year.

We'll get to see the Enzo replacement (rendered top right) first – Ferrari is hinting that the car will be ready to show to customers in November. We already know quite a lot about it, thanks to its maker being keen to show the world that it has got an environmental conscience after all – albeit one which involves a 'HY-KERS' hybrid drivetrain that can drop emissions by a claimed 40 per cent

but also give a decent slug of extra performance. And what performance that will be thanks to the combination of around 800bhp from a 6.3-litre V12 (expected to rev to 9000rpm) plus another 115bhp from an electric motor-cum-generator mounted at the tail of a seven-speed DCT gearbox and engaged via one of the clutches.

McLaren, meanwhile, is currently putting the finishing touches to its own new hypercar (above), currently known only by its internal name of 'P12'. Although development mules can be seen out testing now, the production version won't be

revealed until the 2013 Geneva motor show next March. So what can we expect to see?

From what we know so far, the 'Supermac' will be a McLaren technical tour de force, featuring every trick the company can throw at it in order to out-punch Ferrari's new Enzo. For starters the P12 will feature a rash of new-generation active aero tech that will adjust various aerodynamic features according to cornering load and speed. McLaren is very keen for the P12 to be seen as a product from the world's leading F1 constructor, so it will also get a road-going development of



*‘THE “SUPERMAC” WILL
FEATURE EVERY TRICK THAT
McLAREN CAN THROW AT IT’*

THE FUTURE

*generation hold in store? **Harry Metcalfe** looks at six supercars that are just around the corner*

the KERS power boost technology it uses in Formula 1, with an electric motor/generator acting through the dual-clutch transmission, as in the new Enzo. This will add around 100bhp for those moments when the 750bhp+ from a heavily revised version of the MP4-12C's 3.8-litre twin-turbo V8 is simply not enough.

The P12's suspension will closely resemble the set-up used on the 12C, including McLaren's 'ProActive Chassis Control', which does away with anti-roll bars and uses the interlinked adaptive dampers to control body-roll instead.

Because the P12 will use the same carbonfibre tub developed for the MP4-12C, the cabin dimensions will naturally be very similar

(meaning the P12 will have just two seats, rather than the three some had hoped for). But the looks and stance will be very different thanks to radical new nose and tail sections, giving the car a wider track and longer wheelbase than the 12C. With an all-carbon construction and minimal creature comforts inside, the weight of the P12 is expected to be class-leading, despite it having to carry the heavy batteries and electric motors demanded by the KERS system.

So who will come out on top, McLaren or Ferrari? It's hard not to bet on Ferrari because it has a proven track record in this arena, plus the Enzo replacement has a normally aspirated V12 powerplant, which is bound to tickle buyers'

emotions more than McLaren's blown V8. But McLaren won't roll over easily and is determined the P12 will right a lot of the 'wrongs' of the 12C. Frank Stephenson, the company's automotive design director, will also want the P12 to finally eclipse the iconic McLaren F1. Where the two cars will compete closely is on price, which is expected to be around the £800,000 mark. KERS technology doesn't come cheap...

Ron Dennis recently described the P12 as being 'the world's most technologically advanced supercar', adding: 'We hope it will be hailed as the most innovative, creative supercar of all time.' Brave words – and by this time next year we'll know if he's right.

JAGUAR C-X75 v PORSCHE 918 SPYDER

Both of these cars broke cover in early 2011 and, such was their engineering ingenuity, it was immediately obvious their creators had forgotten to read the supercar rulebook. Today, just over one year on, both concepts have reached the point where they are now undergoing intensive development to turn them into road-going realities.

Where the Jaguar C-X75 (below) and Porsche 918 Spyder (right) differ so dramatically from the Ferrari and McLaren is that they both have far greater on-board battery capacity, allowing them to travel tens of miles on electric power alone and also allowing significantly downsized engines to be used. Yet the on-paper performance of these cars still remains at hypercar levels, assisted in both cases by four-wheel drive, with an electric motor powering the front wheels.

We know much about the Porsche 918 after our recent exclusive ride in the development mule (evo 169), but details of the Jaguar are

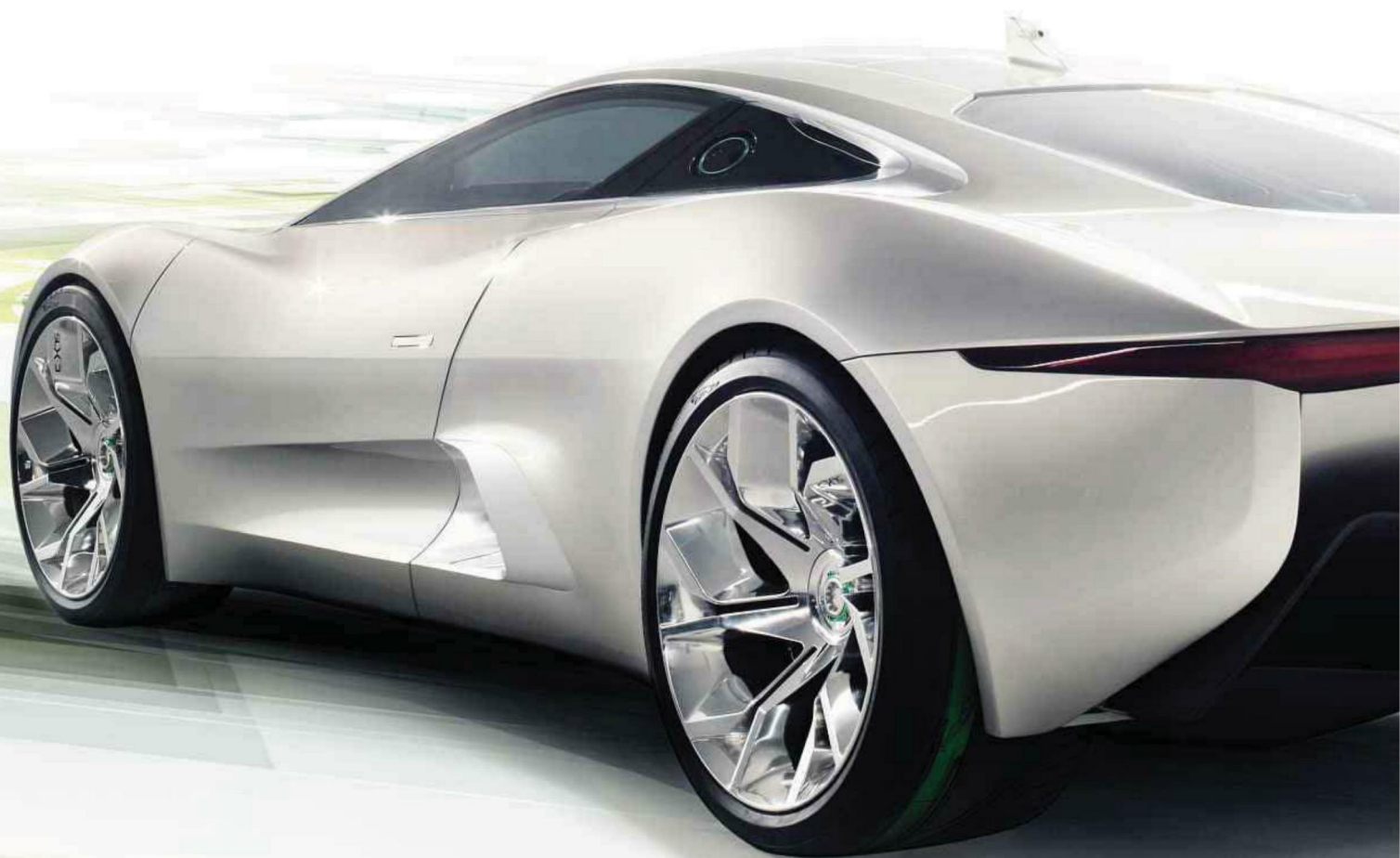
being closely guarded. What we do know is that the engineering team behind the project is based at the headquarters of Williams F1 in Didcot, because Williams was named early on as Jaguar's official partner in the development of this new plug-in hybrid supercar. We also know that the production run will be limited to just 250 units, and that the car will be priced at a chunky £700,000 plus taxes, which is 35 per cent more than Porsche is charging for its 918.

The most controversial aspect of the Jaguar C-X75 is its engine – a 1.6-litre four-cylinder twin-turbo unit developed by Cosworth and which Williams had planned to use in its F1 car until the rules were changed to allow V6 turbo engines from 2014 instead. When the C-X75 was first revealed at the Detroit show in January 2011, drive was provided purely by electric motors, with a pair of gas turbines charging the batteries that powered them. Unlike the concept, however, the production car's petrol motor will power the

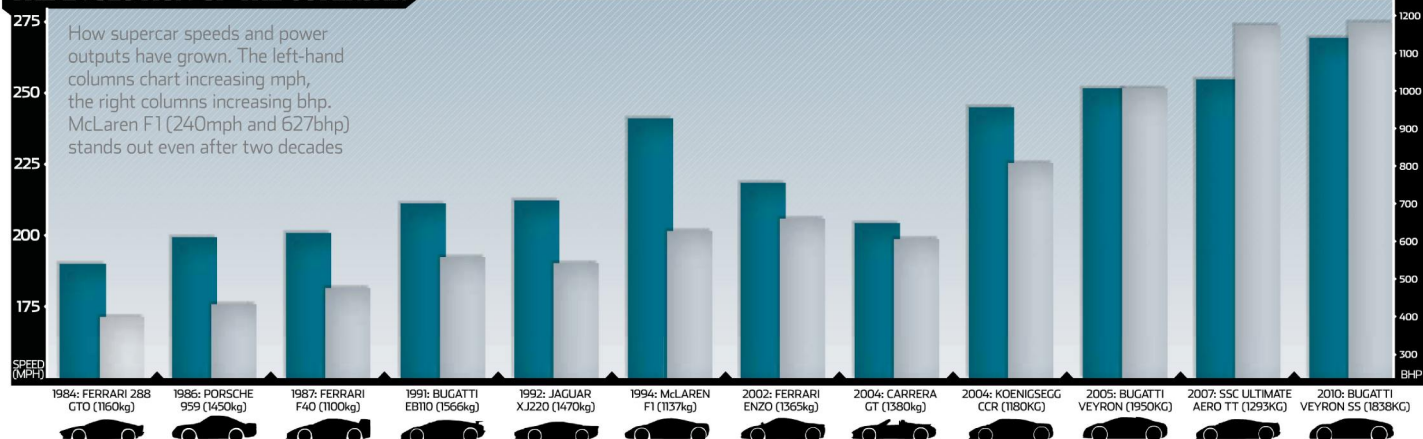
rear wheels directly, but it will be assisted by an electric motor on each axle.

evo recently spoke to Jaguar's global brand director, Adrian Hallmark, and he confirmed that extensive aerodynamic work has taken place in the Williams F1 wind tunnel. Apparently while the overall look of the car is near identical to the concept, the bodywork now features more air intakes due to the amount of cooling air required by the various power sources beneath the car's skin. Hallmark also let slip that the turbocharged 1.6-litre engine has been tuned to give a reliable 313bhp/litre (putting the total engine horsepower at 500bhp), yet CO2 emissions on the EU cycle will be below 98g/km.

Considering Jaguar is claiming 'Bugatti Veyron performance' for the C-X75 – a 0-100mph time of under 6sec is promised – the amount of boost provided by the batteries has to be considerable. The plug-in lithium-ion battery pack positioned down the spine of the car is said to weigh around



THE EVOLUTION OF THE SUPERCAR



230kg and enable an all-electric range of some 35 miles. The C-X75's tub and bodywork are constructed from carbonfibre, giving the car a kerb weight close to 1350kg.

Compare that to the claimed 1700kg target weight for the 562bhp, 4.6-litre V8-engined

Porsche 918 (also a plug-in hybrid, with electric motors front and rear) and you can see the significant weight advantage the Jaguar has thanks to its smaller four-cylinder motor.

Whether customers will see it that way remains to be seen. The C-X75 may be very beautiful in

the carbon but there's a whiff of XJ220 about it, thanks to that tiny engine (the 220 was criticised for its less-than-exotic V6). A 1.6-litre four-pot in a £840,000 supercar doesn't seem right somehow, but perhaps we should wait until early test drives begin later this year before passing judgement.



'JAGUAR IS CLAIMING VEYRON LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE, SO THE BOOST PROVIDED BY THE BATTERIES HAS TO BE CONSIDERABLE'

LOTUS ESPRIT v HONDA NSX

These two junior supercars are a little further off – the earliest we can hope to see them is late 2014, and Lotus's future is still mired in uncertainty – but both are intriguing in their own different ways. The NSX (right) appears to have a rather sober air about it, but under the skin is some of the cleverest technology ever seen in a Honda – and that's saying something. Like the Jaguar and Porsche, the next-gen NSX will be four-wheel drive, in this

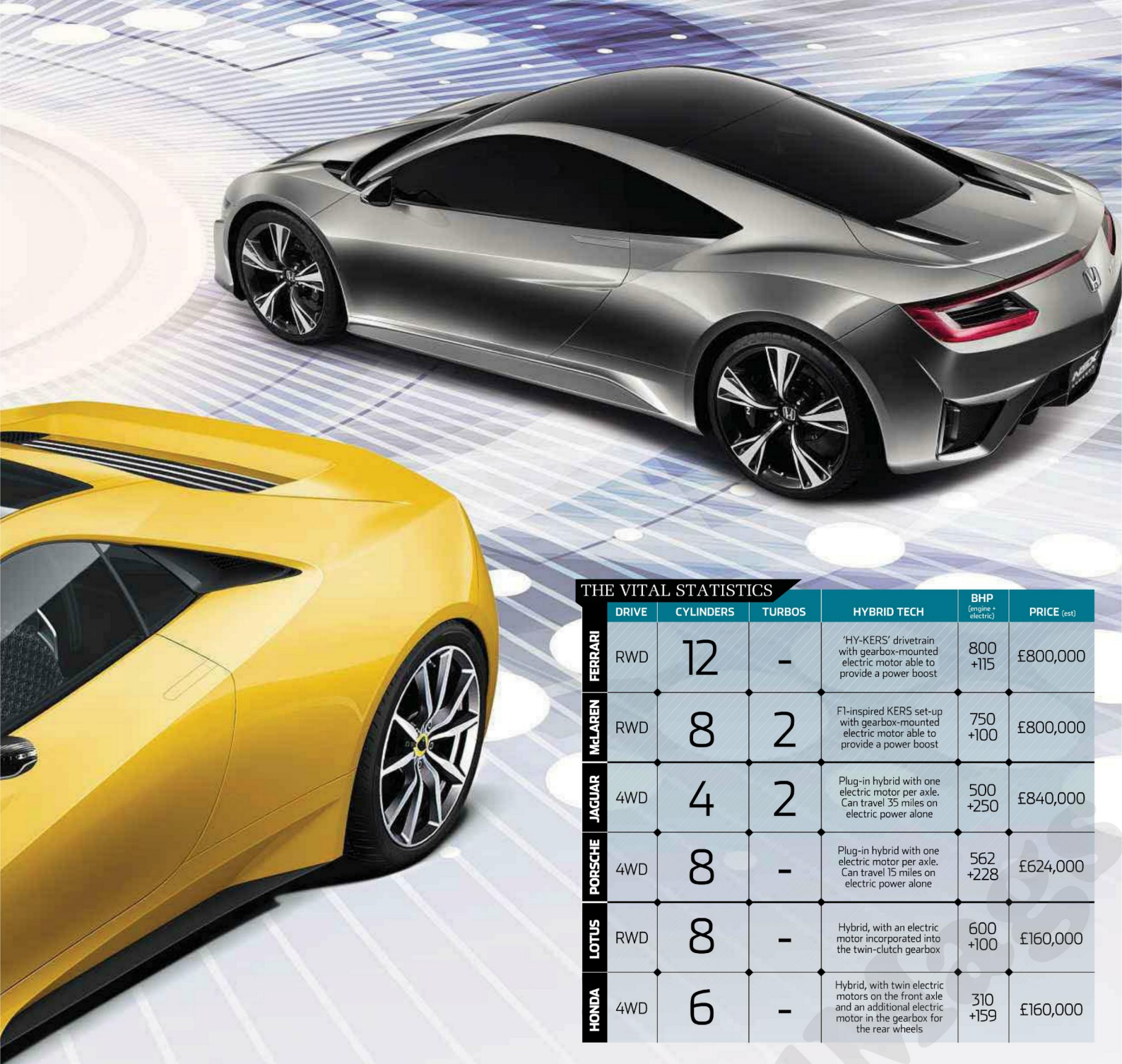
case with twin electric motors powering the front wheels, while a mid-mounted 3.5-litre V6 engine delivers its 310bhp+ to the rears via a new seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox. The gearbox itself has a 30kW (40bhp) electric motor within it.

The new Esprit (below) won't have any electric motors for its front wheels, but there is still the possibility of hybrid power for the top-end models. Providing the vast majority of the power in the Esprit will be Lotus's very own, new-from-

the-ump-cover-up, 4.8-litre, all-aluminium V8. The aim was to out-punch the Ferrari 458, but Lotus insiders hint that they've gone way beyond that with peak power figures in excess of 600bhp being whispered about in the corridors at Hethel.

It's not only the capacity of the engine that is producing the power here, it's how high it can rev too – peak revs could be above 9000rpm if durability trials continue to go well. For a car designed to compete with the 458 Italia, you'd think that would be enough, but Lotus has been tempted to venture down the hybrid route too. And that's not surprising, because the company has some real expertise in this area – not only





THE VITAL STATISTICS

	DRIVE	CYLINDERS	TURBOS	HYBRID TECH	BHP (engine + electric)	PRICE (est)
FERRARI	RWD	12	-	'HY-KERS' drivetrain with gearbox-mounted electric motor able to provide a power boost	800 +115	£800,000
McLAREN	RWD	8	2	F1-inspired KERS set-up with gearbox-mounted electric motor able to provide a power boost	750 +100	£800,000
JAGUAR	4WD	4	2	Plug-in hybrid with one electric motor per axle. Can travel 35 miles on electric power alone	500 +250	£840,000
PORSCHE	4WD	8	-	Plug-in hybrid with one electric motor per axle. Can travel 15 miles on electric power alone	562 +228	£624,000
LOTUS	RWD	8	-	Hybrid, with an electric motor incorporated into the twin-clutch gearbox	600 +100	£160,000
HONDA	4WD	6	-	Hybrid, with twin electric motors on the front axle and an additional electric motor in the gearbox for the rear wheels	310 +159	£160,000

has Lotus Technologies been working on various systems for outside car companies, but Lotus's chief technical officer, Wolf Zimmermann, was in charge of the Mercedes SLS E-Cell electric car project at AMG just before he joined the Norfolk-based firm and is keen to see how similar technology can benefit a company like Lotus.

Zimmermann has wanted to add electric power to the Esprit all along, to give the driver a KERS-like power boost activated via a button on the steering wheel, as well as allowing the hybrid Esprit to be driven at 'normal' speeds solely under electric power. This will be achieved by using an all-new dual-clutch gearbox that Lotus is currently developing, with the electric motor

operating via one of the two clutches, just as proposed on the new Enzo and McLaren P12.

Over at Honda, they've gone even further, and while the NSX's V6 has nothing like the horsepower tally of Lotus's V8, it is supplemented by considerably more electric power, meaning performance should be significantly better than the modest figure of 469bhp might suggest.

Neither the Lotus nor the Honda will be anything like as expensive as the Ferrari, McLaren or Jaguar, coming in at around a quarter of the price – call it £160,000 each. Yet all the indications are that they will be every bit as exciting to drive. Enthusiasts everywhere will be hoping that Lotus gets a chance to join the party.

CONCLUSION

The push to add hybrid technology to the next generation of supercars is driven by two factors: added performance and lower emissions. All this technology doesn't come cheap, of course – the Ferrari and Porsche will cost around twice as much as their Enzo and Carrera GT predecessors of a decade ago. Battery packs and electric motors add weight, too, though there are benefits here in that batteries can be positioned almost anywhere in the car, allowing engineers to fine-tune how weight is distributed and lower the car's centre of gravity. Whether the extra weight and cost will be worth it, we'll have to wait and see.

FORD FOCUS ST v
VW GOLF GTI





HATCH OF THE DAY

*With 247bhp and a newfound appetite for corners, the latest Ford Focus ST promises to be one of the most exciting hatches of 2012. **Mike Duff** drives it back-to-back with the VW Golf GTI to find out just how good it is*

How hot should a hot hatch be? Your instinct is probably to say scorching, but as this month's new arrivals from Ford and Vauxhall prove, temperature comes at a price. The new Astra VXR that our Henry has been fanging around the Nürburgring on page 98 is fire-alarm hot: 276bhp, a differential cleverer than most school leavers and a £26,995 screen sticker. By comparison, the new Focus ST, being tested here against the Golf GTI, might seem closer to the korma end of the spice scale with less power, no tricky diff and nothing like the same level of visual aggression.

But then when you factor in the £21,995 starting price you'll realise that the Ford undercuts all of its major rivals, making it something of a recession-busting bang-per-buck bargain.

And maybe Ford is on to something. Performance hatchbacks have been having a tough time of things, especially in Europe where the combination of CO2 taxation and recession have seen the genre become an endangered species. Even in Britain, where a substantial number of us like our hatches served scorchio, sales have been in a steady decline – Vauxhall reckons it's only going to sell half as many of its new Astra VXR as

it did the previous model. Which is why Ford took the radical step of turning this Focus ST into a global model, built to work in America as well as Europe, and with big emphasis on useability and value; the company is pretty much making as much fuss about the ST's official 39mpg economy as it is the 247bhp produced by the new 2-litre turbo engine. Hardcore thrills, if they come at all, are reserved for an (as yet unconfirmed) RS version. For now, the Golf GTI is absolutely where Ford is aiming.

PICKING UP this ST direct from the Ford factory in Cologne gives it an early chance to prove, on a quiet stretch of Autobahn, that it's certainly not lacking in raw firepower. Officially it will manage 154mph, foregoing the need for a 155mph limiter, but the run down to our rendezvous sees an indicated 262kph – or 162mph – with the car tracking rock-steady. Even allowing for an optimistic speedo, that's still pretty impressive.

We've chosen to meet in the small town of Prüm, *evo*'s favourite bit of Deutschland and gateway to some of the country's finest driving roads. This is the quietest corner of the Eifel mountains, about 40 minutes from the Nürburgring but without any of the traffic drawn by the world's most famous racetrack, and with some epic roads that start to feel busy if you see more than two other cars within five minutes. Andy Wallace has pedalled the GTI from the UK in something approaching record time, and he delivers



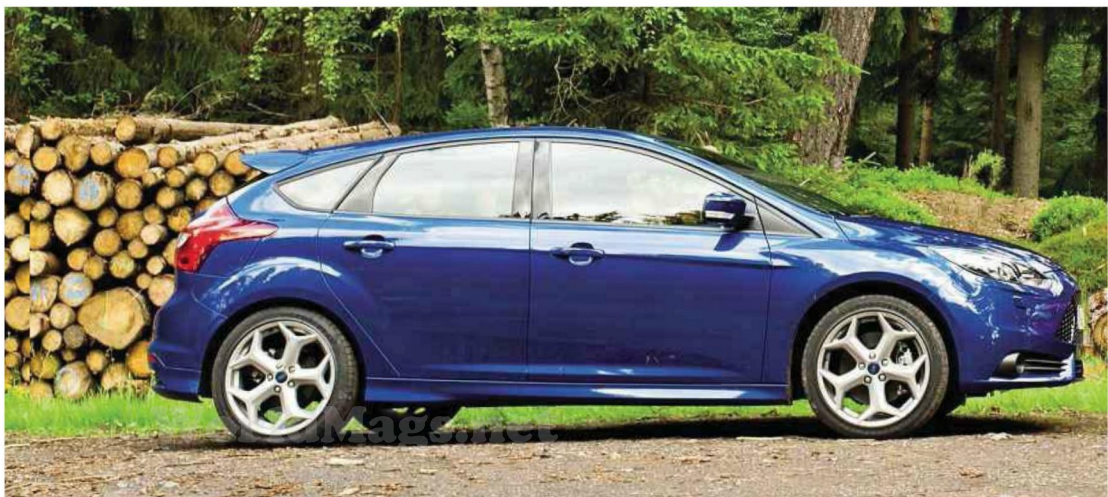
his early verdict from behind a broad grin: 'Good car, that.' It might not be the segment's sharpest steer, but if you've got to cross four countries between breakfast and dinner, then it's clear the Golf takes some beating.

With the two cars parked next to each other, it's hard not to give all of the early points to the Volkswagen. Ford doesn't

produce a three-door Focus any more, so the ST shares the same five-door shell as the standard hatchback – and sitting beside the right-from-every-angle three-door GTI (on those gorgeous optional 18in 'telephone dial' alloys) the Focus looks ungainly and a bit awkward, its body kit and deeper front bumper seemingly accentuating the standard car's chin-heavy



ST engine is down from five cylinders to four, but power is up from 222bhp to 247; large rear wing helps to spice up the Ford's five-door body





*'THE FOCUS IS PROPERLY
RAPID WHEN UNLEASHED,
PROGRESS ACCOMPANIED BY
A RORTY SOUNDTRACK'*

styling. And, at the back, that centre-exit exhaust looks a bit like an aftermarket afterthought.

In the Ford's cabin it's a similar story – the ST-isation is definitely of the lick-of-paint variety rather than a full tear-down. There are some huggy (and very blue) Recaro buckets, three supplementary dials on the top of the dashboard (like

the previous ST) and a couple of subtle badges. But otherwise this is exactly the same cabin you'll find in a rep-spec TDCI, with cheap-feeling plastics and, if you've paid extra for the navigation, a tiny display screen at the top of the dashboard with the sort of blocky fonts you'd expect from a five-year-old Nokia.

This shouldn't matter, of course – hot



hatches should be judged by the way they drive rather than the rebound damping of their grab handles. But the downward sales trajectory of the segment, and the way it's been mirrored by the relentless rise of posh-badged alternatives, suggests that it's more of a factor than we probably think it should be. And it's a point that's further reinforced by the predictable excellence of the Golf's cabin and the solidity of its fit and finish. The GTI might cost £3600 more than the ST, but when you sit in both cars back to back it's hard not to conclude – in purely shallow and subjective terms, naturally – that the supplement is entirely justified.

Or, in other words, the Focus is going to have to be a seriously impressive thing on the road if it's going to stand a chance of overhauling the Golf as a total ownership proposition. Mechanically it's a very different car from the previous ST, which was always defined very much by its engine. This was for both good and bad reasons – the Volvo-sourced turbo five delivered solid performance and outpunched most of its contemporary rivals, but its considerable mass also had a noticeable effect on the car's dynamic balance, especially in slower corners where it struggled to deliver the sort of agility you'd expect from a fast Ford. Now the old five-pot has gone and, on first experience, the new 2-litre from Ford's 'EcoBoost' family of four-cylinder turbos is a far better-rounded unit, with headline figures of 247bhp and 265lb ft of torque.

In the hills above Prüm the new

GTI engine has just 207bhp, but it's enough to stay in touch with the Focus; twin tailpipes give the Golf's rear a slightly more purposeful look

FORD FOCUS ST v VW GOLF GTI

engine delivers proper pace. It's clearly turbocharged – there's no major lag but the power delivery is boosty and the way the torque builds in a non-linear fashion keeps your right foot busy modulating the pace. Like the smaller EcoBoost engines, the 2-litre doesn't give much urge below about 1500rpm, and it's not a natural revver either – ask it to go beyond 6000rpm and it starts to feel a bit asthmatic. But the solid mid-range, and the ease with which the slick-shifting six-speed manual 'box helps you to extract it, means it's properly rapid when unleashed in the real world. And progress is accompanied by a rorty soundtrack that Wallace accurately describes as being 'somewhere between a four- and a five-cylinder'.

The Focus's big trick is definitely its steering. Having read prior to this test that it has a variable-ratio electric rack, alarm bells were jangling. Experience has suggested that less tech tends to be better when it comes to steering weight and feel. But even after just a few kilometres it's clear that this is a seriously impressive system, with the assistance motor delivering instantaneous response while

allowing proper feedback to get back to the wheel. At first the reactions feel a bit too keen – you need to mentally recalibrate to the quickness of the rack. But once you're dialled-in you realise that you can trust the system to both deliver your intentions to the front end and also tell you how much grip the impressively adhesive 235-section Goodyear Eagles still have to call on.

At this point the Focus delivers another dynamic surprise – torque steer. Ever since the first Focus RS was castigated for its relentless ditch-seeking under power, Ford has been a bit sensitive about allowing any of its quicker models to exhibit much



Above: trademark trio of dash-top dials is still present and correct in the ST; rest of interior (bottom) is a bit hit and miss. Right: Focus's chassis gives you options in the corners; Golf's (below) just grips and eventually understeers



in the way of self-steering, even going to the trouble and expense of developing the clever 'RevoKnuckle' front suspension for the mk2 Focus RS to combat the problem. That's one of the costs that's been saved in the new ST, which apparently uses steering motor inputs to try to cancel out unwanted torque effects. But, on generally smooth German tarmac, it doesn't come close to eliminating the tugging under big throttle openings in first, second and third gear as the car sniffs out bumps and cambers. It's not excessive – we're not talking a Saab 9-3 Viggen here – but it's enough to leave me slightly concerned as to how well the car will deal with the lumpier challenge of British tarmac.

Still, at least the rest of the ST's dynamic experience is pretty much spot-on. Springing initially feels a bit soft by hot hatch standards, but firm dampers keep everything clamped and body control is good. The Focus has been set up with a properly adjustable back end, which both provides a measure of passive steering under hard cornering loads, but also responds to a mid-corner throttle lift by tightening its line in an instinctive fashion.

'THE FORD'S CHASSIS HAS GOT A REAL FLOW TO IT AND SEEMS





TO GENUINELY RELISH THE CHALLENGE OF A DEMANDING ROAD'

It's not as tail-happy as something like the Mégane 265 – it takes real abuse (and a fully deactivated stability control system) to persuade the Focus into actual oversteer at anything above modest speeds – but the chassis has got a real flow to it and it seems to genuinely relish the challenge of a demanding road.

By contrast, the Golf seems almost stodgy when asked to cover the same ground at similar speeds. In large part this is down to the need to tune yourself back into its lower-geared steering, which sees you clutching another quarter-turn of lock in second- and third-gear corners. But it's also because the GTI has clearly been designed to deliver effortless pace rather than the Ford's fully interactive driving experience.

Let's start with the good stuff, of which there is plenty. The first surprise is that, despite the Golf's power disparity – with 207bhp it's 40bhp adrift of the Ford – it feels barely slower than the Focus, both in straight lines and when asked to deal with a twisty road. Full-throttle straights prove that, although the Focus can draw away, it does so slowly. Throw corners into the mix and the GTI's 225-section Bridgestone Potenza generate every bit as much



Above: Golf's interior feels the more expensive. Left: ST has figure-hugging Recaros up front. Below: GTI's tartan-covered sports seats



adhesion as the Ford's fractionally fatter Goodyears: throughout two days of hard driving (and with a Le Mans winner acting as the experiment's 'control') the two cars prove to be almost perfectly matched, regardless of the terrain they are being asked to digest.

The Golf also scores the nicer engine. The current incarnation of Volkswagen's 2-litre TSI motor deserves to be listed as one of the great turbo motors, with an almost perfectly linear response to the long-travel throttle pedal and an enthusiasm to rev that together belie its forced induction. It will happily pull past 6500rpm, filling the cabin with a zingy, mechanical tone that's every bit as pleasing as the Ford's bassier exhaust note.

Despite having what feels like firmer suspension settings, the VW rides just as well as the Ford, too, levelling out bumps and compressions that the ST's softer springs try to fill in. Following the Focus in the Golf over a bumpy road is a fascinating lesson in the differing approaches to suspension kinematics, with the ST's wheels being visibly deflected by imperfections that the Golf doesn't seem to notice. And despite the slower rack, the steering is perfectly decent and front-end

*'THE GOLF IS STILL
SERIOUSLY IMPRESSIVE, BUT
THE FOCUS IS SET TO BE
THE DRIVER'S CHOICE'*



responses are delivered with a faithful linearity that matches the rest of the driving experience.

What the Golf doesn't do nearly as well as the Focus is play. It's relentlessly sensible – clearly set up around a brief of grip rather than slip. In slower stuff this means that the GTI feels a bit dull and inert compared with the ST, without any of the Ford's enthusiasm for tightening its line. And there's pretty much no point in turning the traction control off – breach the limits and you'll just find understeer, while if you leave the systems switched on, the XDS electronic diff's ability to brake a spinning wheel to redistribute torque helps to keep the Golf on a chosen line.

The GTI's brakes also lack the bite of those in the Focus – and tire sooner when asked to deal with an all-corner diet. The Golf is summed up neatly by Wallace: 'It's good, but the Focus is just better.'

ON FIRST IMPRESSIONS, Ford has successfully trodden a very fine line with the Focus ST – dynamic enough to be genuinely interesting and sensible enough to justify itself as everyday transport. We'd take that official 39mpg figure with a generous pinch of salt – we managed a considerably less impressive 15mpg over 250 miles of hard testing. But it's fair to say that, if you'll let me cash a pun I've been sitting on for the entire story, this is a far more focused car than the Golf GTI.

Above: as well as the five-door body pictured here, the ST will also be available, for the first time, as an estate; signature colours include this Spirit Blue and, ahem, Tangerine Scream

The VW is still a seriously impressive all-rounder – but the ST is definitely set to be the driver's choice. The next big question is how it will deal with the likes of the pricier and more powerful Mégane 265 and Astra VXR – a question we'll answer for you as soon as we can.

Yet there's a fascinating addendum to this story, a still unwritten chapter that could turn it on its head. Because the man who led the team responsible for both this ST and all of Ford's recent performance products – Jost Capito – has recently

defected to Volkswagen. And with Ford refusing to confirm that we'll be seeing an RS version of this Focus, it's entirely possible that the ST will be as sporty as the range ever gets. With that in mind it doesn't require much imagination to see that, with VW's billions behind him, Capito will be using the Golf as the canvas for his next masterpiece.

■ *A big thank you to DFDS Seaways for our ferry crossing. For more details visit www.dfdsseaways.co.uk*

SPECIFICATIONS

FORD FOCUS ST	VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTI
Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc, turbo	Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo
CO2 169g/km	CO2 170g/km
Power 247bhp @ 5500rpm	Power 207bhp @ 5300-6200rpm
Torque 265lb ft @ 1750-4500rpm	Torque 207lb ft @ 1700-5200rpm
Transmission Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive, TVC, ESP	Transmission Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive, XDS, ESP
Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Independent multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Rear suspension Independent four-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Ventilated discs front and rear, ABS	Brakes Ventilated discs, 312mm front, 253mm rear, ABS
Wheels 18in front and rear	Wheels 7.5 x 17in front and rear
Tyres 235/40 ZR18 front and rear	Tyres 225/45 ZR17 front and rear
Weight (kerb) 1362kg	Weight (kerb) 1318kg
Power-to-weight 184bhp/ton	Power-to-weight 160bhp/ton
0-62mph 6.5sec (claimed)	0-62mph 6.9sec (claimed)
Top speed 154mph (claimed)	Top speed 148mph (claimed)
Basic price £21,995	Basic price £25,650
On sale September	On sale Now

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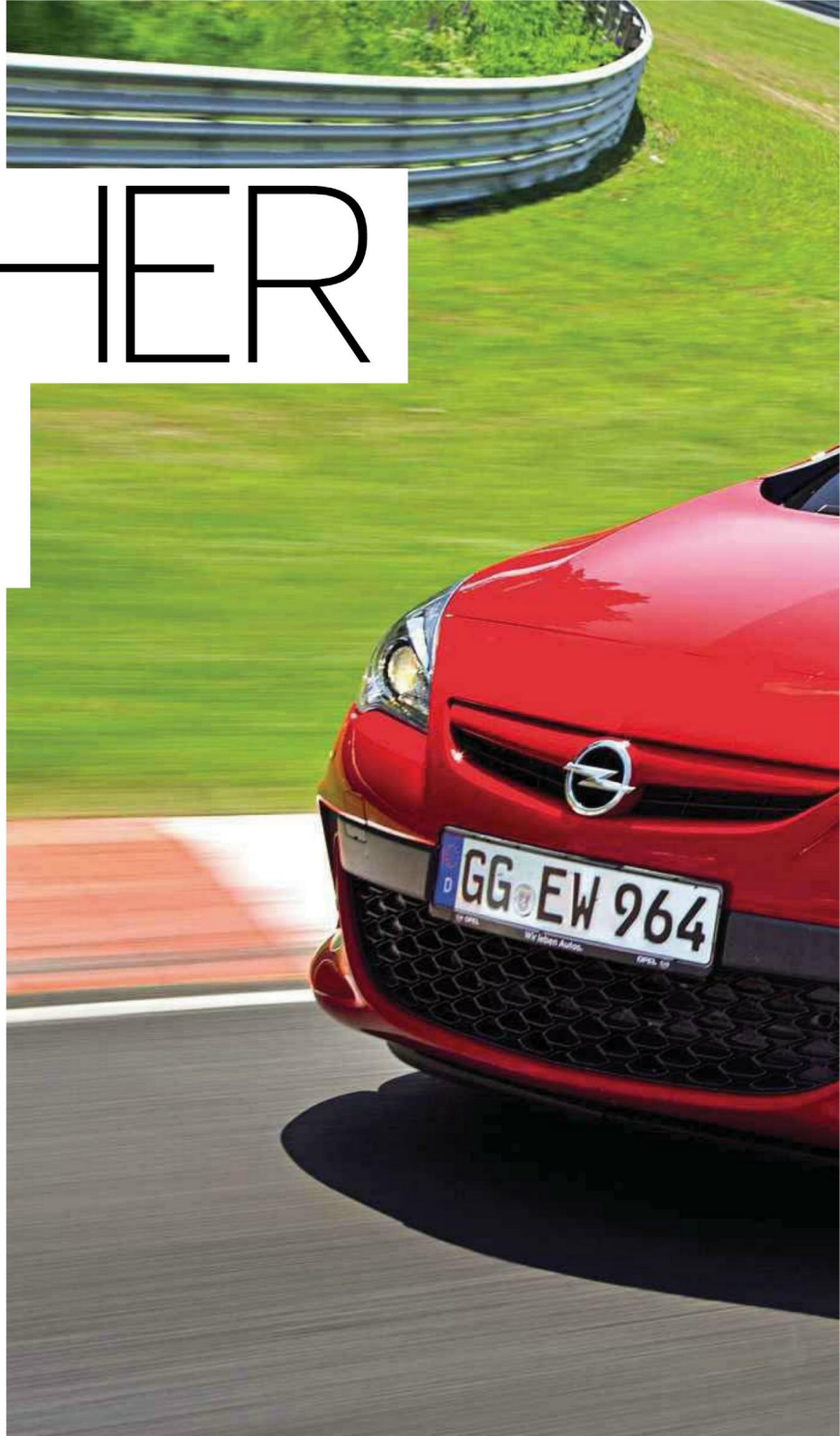
ANOTHER LEVEL

*Not only is the new 276bhp Astra VXR the most powerful front-drive hot hatch on sale, it is also the most complete VXR to date, as **Henry Catchpole** discovers*

A cloak of scepticism is not the best thing with which to approach a new car. It's the sort of thing that should be reserved for celebrity marriages or Jägermeister. But the prospect of a faintly ridiculous 276bhp going through the front wheels of the new Astra VXR did not seem like a promising one. Launching it on the Nordschleife appeared to be bordering on lunacy...

Previous VXRs have frequently had enticing, headline-grabbing power and torque figures, but they haven't always been the last word in dynamic refinement. We quite liked the last-generation 237bhp Astra precisely because of its (at the time) big numbers and slightly wild character, but in hot hatch terms it was about as subtle and sophisticated a statement as strutting around with a huge dog on a big chain. Launching that Astra VXR on the Nordschleife would have been about as successful as letting a Rottweiler loose in a cattery and asking it to play nicely. But by the time I've flick-flacked through the mesmerising sweeps of Hatzenbach about a mile into my first lap of the Green Hell, it's clear that this new Astra isn't like the VXRs that have gone before it. Another 12 or so miles later I can hardly believe what's just happened. The 295lb ft of torque was not only useable in a straight line but on the way out of corners too. What's more, the steering was beautifully weighted and the chassis was precise and reactive. Even the brakes refused to wilt.

As the morning progresses, things only improve. As I get more confident and push harder, the car keeps responding. With a little encouragement I manage not to brake before Flugplatz, jumping the crest on the way into the fast right-hander. Later in the day I summon the courage to keep the throttle buried all the way through the terrifying compression that concertinas your vertebrae at the bottom of the Fuchsröhre (I was so delighted I almost forgot to brake for Adenauer Forst). Now, I completely understand that if you haven't driven round the Ring then these are meaningless, G-force-fuelled gabblings – mere German-flecked boasts. But you'll have to trust me when I say that the warm glow of pride





Left: Catchpole puts the new Astra VXR through its paces on the roads near the Ring. Above: this car wears the Opel OPC branding used in the rest of Europe

and the empty-stomached sense of survival each of these imparts feels every bit as good as hearing the examiner say the words 'you've passed' when you're 17.

When you delve into the spec sheet for the new Astra VXR, beyond the initial go-to 5.9sec 0-60mph figure and the big-numbered outputs, it becomes more obvious why this car is so competent. There's a proper, mechanical limited-slip diff between the front wheels. There is HiPerStrut front suspension – Vauxhall's equivalent of Ford's RevoKnuckle or Renault's PerfoHub – to reduce torque steer. The adaptive dampers are by Sachs, the brakes by Brembo. Most telling of all, however, is that the steering is hydraulically rather than electrically power-assisted

That last detail is astonishing in this day and age. Volker Strycek, ex-DTM driver, Nürburgring 24hr winner and head

of the small team at the Opel Performance Centre based at the Ring (OPC being what we in the UK know as VXR), admits that it wasn't easy convincing the powers that be to go down this route, but he was adamant that it was the right thing for the car. As if any more evidence were needed that Strycek and his team know what they are doing, the ESP system has also been tuned impeccably, to the point where, as in Renaultsport cars, it's so unintrusive that you never really feel the need to turn it off.

Although the intention was that we should spend all day driving the Astra around the Ring, there are plenty of good roads spidering out from Nürburg and Adenau, so after lunch I leave the hoards of 911s behind in the car park (there are no fewer than four GT3 RS 4.0s and probably over 20 'normal' GT3 RSs there!) and head off into the Eifel mountains.



'YOU CAN COVER GROUND AT AN ASTONISHING RATE, AND IT



Above: turbo 2-litre engine produces 276bhp. Left: wing is optional. Below: ESP is well-judged, so you won't feel the need to reach for this button



The slightly more sedate pace means that the highs and lows of the interior come a little more sharply into focus. The big bucket seats, complete with inflating thigh and thorax bolsters, like in a V8 RS4 or V10 M5, are great. The pedal spacing and the huge reach and rake adjustment of the steering wheel are both excellent too. The hard plastics and dull typefaces that make up the sea of small buttons on the centre console are less inspiring, though, and the shallow rake of the windscreen makes this feel like a big car at first. Importantly, however, the old, awkwardly angular gearknob has been replaced with something that's much more svelte.

It's worth mentioning the outside too, because the look that you see in these pictures is not standard; the larger wheels, bi-plane rear wing and side skirts are all part of an Aero Pack that adds £995 to the base car's £26,995 price tag. Something approaching 90 per cent of UK orders placed so far include it and understandably so, because the VXR looks good with it but a little too restrained without it.

Accelerate hard and there's a harsh rushing noise, like air being ripped violently through a pipe under high pressure. If Darth Vader had gone into vacuum cleaners instead of Death Stars then this would have been the sound of housework the world over (and in galaxies far, far away). It's a sound I first remember hearing in a 997 Turbo and then again in the Mégane R26.R, and while it's not an aurally attractive soundtrack, it is becoming something of a signature tune for purposeful, turbocharged cars. Strangely, though, the blown 2-litre engine is perhaps the least impressive part of the VXR. There is very noticeable turbo lag below 3500rpm, so you have to really work the gears through slower corners, the engine not quite having the flexibility that its 295lb ft of torque suggests it should.

Keep the engine on the boil, though, and you can cover ground at an astonishing rate. What's more, the VXR soaks up bumps and broken tarmac in a way that you simply wouldn't credit given our test car's huge 20in wheels and 35-profile rubber. There are three dynamic modes that you can select: Normal, Sport and VXR. These each progressively ramp up the steering weight, suspension stiffness and throttle response. What's remarkable is that although you can clearly tell the difference and feel the benefits of each distinct step, you can happily drive a fast lap of the Ring in Normal and not feel all at sea, yet also drive down a bumpy B-road in VXR mode and not feel like you're in a fight to the death.

As you've probably gathered, the Astra VXR is an impressive car. At 1475kg it is heavier than our current favourite full-size hot hatch, the Mégane 265 (1387kg), and you can feel that it isn't quite as lively and light on its toes as a result, but the flip side is that the Vauxhall is arguably a more habitable everyday car than the Renault. I'd also say the Astra's steering is better weighted and more consistent in those crucial first few degrees as you instigate the turn into the corner, but the Mégane Cup's limited-slip diff is the more startlingly aggressive and impressive when you get on the throttle to accelerate out of the corner...

As for the new Focus ST featured on the previous pages, let's just say that the VXR has set the bar very high for this less powerful but more affordable rival. One thing is for sure: when the VXR meets its rivals on British tarmac, it'll be a much closer battle than we might have expected.



SPECIFICATIONS

VAUXHALL ASTRA VXR

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo

CO2 189g/km

Power 276bhp @ 5500rpm

Torque 295lb ft @ 2500-4500rpm

Transmission Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, ESP

Front suspension HiPerStruts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

Rear suspension Torsion beam with Watt's linkage, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

Brakes Ventilated discs, 355mm front, 315mm rear, ABS

Wheels 8 x 19in front and rear (20in optional)

Tyres 245/40 ZR19 front and rear

Weight (kerb) 1475kg

Power-to-weight 190bhp/ton

0-60mph 5.9sec (claimed)

Top speed 155mph (claimed)

Price £26,995

On sale July

EVO RATING ★★★★★

Above left: big Brembo brakes provide strong, reliable bite. Left: gearknob has, thankfully, been improved over the one in the old car

SOAKS UP BUMPS IN A WAY THAT YOU SIMPLY WOULDN'T CREDIT'



INSIDE THE MIND OF McNISH

*On the run-up to this year's Le Mans 24 Hours, sportscar ace Allan McNish took time out to talk to **evo** about all things racing, from his favourite cars to his most memorable on-track moments – including, of course, that crash. Interview by **Henry Catchpole***

LIVING IN MONACO

■ It's like Disneyland for adults. Especially around about Grand Prix time because it's the glitz and the glamour and it's just a big party town in a way. But the rest of the year it's like a village. It's also a very easy place for a sports person to live because there are other sports people around with the same mental attitude and the same reasonably transient lifestyle. It's quite a good leveller as well, because however important you think you are, you're actually not that important when you stand next to some other guy who happens to have done something much more than you.

CRASHING AT LE MANS IN 2011

■ I remember it pretty much perfectly because the thing is that your brain is used to processing information at 200mph because that's the speed that you're approaching corners and braking points and everything else, so your eyes are already reacting that quickly, your brain's reacting that quickly, so when you're having a big accident you're still processing the information. I don't have the presence of mind to pull my feet back and cross my arms and all that rubbish, I've usually got my foot buried into the brake pedal and bracing myself for impact. But in terms of memory of the crash I've got as much memory of that as of any of the overtakes or anything else that goes on.

RETURNING TO THE SCENE OF HIS ACCIDENT

■ It's a flat-out downhill esses. It's not difficult to go through it. If there was ever a thought it was difficult to go back in a car at any point after an accident, you shouldn't get in it. Plain and simple. And that's from two points of view: one, you wouldn't be fast enough and the second thing is it's more dangerous when you're tentative than when you commit to something.

THE MOST DIFFICULT CAR TO DRIVE

■ The Lola T91 Formula 3000 car. It was very unstable – turn-in oversteer, mid-corner understeer, no traction, no consistency, so therefore you couldn't predict what it was going to do. If a car has one problem you can work through that, but when it does different things at different corners...

THE BEST CARS HE'S DRIVEN

■ The Renault R23. That car, when we got it to Suzuka, was phenomenal. It was absolutely stunning to drive. It had a really





good secure rear but just the right amount of understeer so that you could work with the car. Of the Audis, it's the R10 at the end of its life, because we still had quite a lot of power and torque before they really started restricting things massively, and we had a lot of downforce. It was a car where you just had to pick it up and throw it around. If you were gentle with it then it just didn't work. If you hustled it and really gave it stick then you got the lap time out of it, but you had to do it all race, you couldn't just do it for one or two laps, you had to really keep on it all the time.

THE REVISIONS TO SUZUKA AFTER HIS 2002 F1 CRASH

■ Ah, it wasn't the corner's fault. I don't think they should have changed it.

AERODYNAMICS

■ It's difficult, aerodynamics. And I think it's difficult for the aerodynamicists because it is a bit of a black art. It's like tyres – I'm not sure, honestly, if the experts in that area understand it all the time. I think there's a few head-scratching sessions going on out the back.

The big thing about aero grip is that when you lose it, [snaps fingers] you lose it. There's no warning, there's no sort of gentle nudge and pat on the shoulder to say, 'By the way, I'm feeling as if I'm going to be out of here in a minute or two, so you might want to lift off that throttle.' It's gone. And to some extent you're working on your pure reactions when it does, and that's when you see these very quick hand movements.

THE ALL-SINGING, ALL-DANCING 1993 BENETTON

■ I have to say it was starting to get a bit busy in the cockpit then,



'FOR ME DRIVING IS ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS AT THE END.

because there were so many permutations of what you could adjust. Active [ride] was pretty bloody impressive. It was odd that you'd be sitting in the pits and the car would go up and down. You still felt bumps and bits and pieces, it didn't damp everything out, but it was just more constant grip. The four-wheel steering was fantastic in the high-speed corners like Becketts at Silverstone. It was amazing. But when you went into the lower-speed corners it was difficult for your brain to get around it because it felt like turn-in oversteer, but it wasn't, it was just the way it was going into the corner. Sadly it only raced once, at Suzuka, and then it was banned.

TECHNOLOGY VERSUS REAL DRIVERS

■ I don't think you can stop progress. And I still think the cream rises to the top of driving talent. That technology probably favours some more than others, but that was the same when they came in with aerodynamics, and I'm sure it favoured some more than others when they got seat belts. I wouldn't have thought that if Jackie Stewart was starting his F1 career today he would have a problem adapting and I wouldn't have thought Michael Schumacher would have had a problem adapting if he was driving an Auto Union in the '30s. You drive to the tools you've got.

If you ban traction control people don't forget what they've learned, so they'll just create the same effect with something else. Ban traction control nowadays and you won't see big power-oversteer slides like we remember from the '70s. The big power-oversteer slides were because they couldn't lean on the front tyre, so they had to use the power to make it turn. Now all the loading goes on the front tyre to make it turn and the fastest way is still not

sliding the car out of a corner. So you don't get those romantic ideas of the past – it's gone.

THE SENSATIONS OF DRIVING

■ For me it's about what happens at the end of it, it's not about the sensations. It's about piecing it all together and then seeing the result. It's not making the jigsaw, it's the final picture. I couldn't just, say for example, go on a trackday and drive round and enjoy myself. The thrill of just doing that I get doing other things, it's got to have some sort of competitive edge to it.

HIS FAVOURITE CIRCUIT

■ Suzuka.

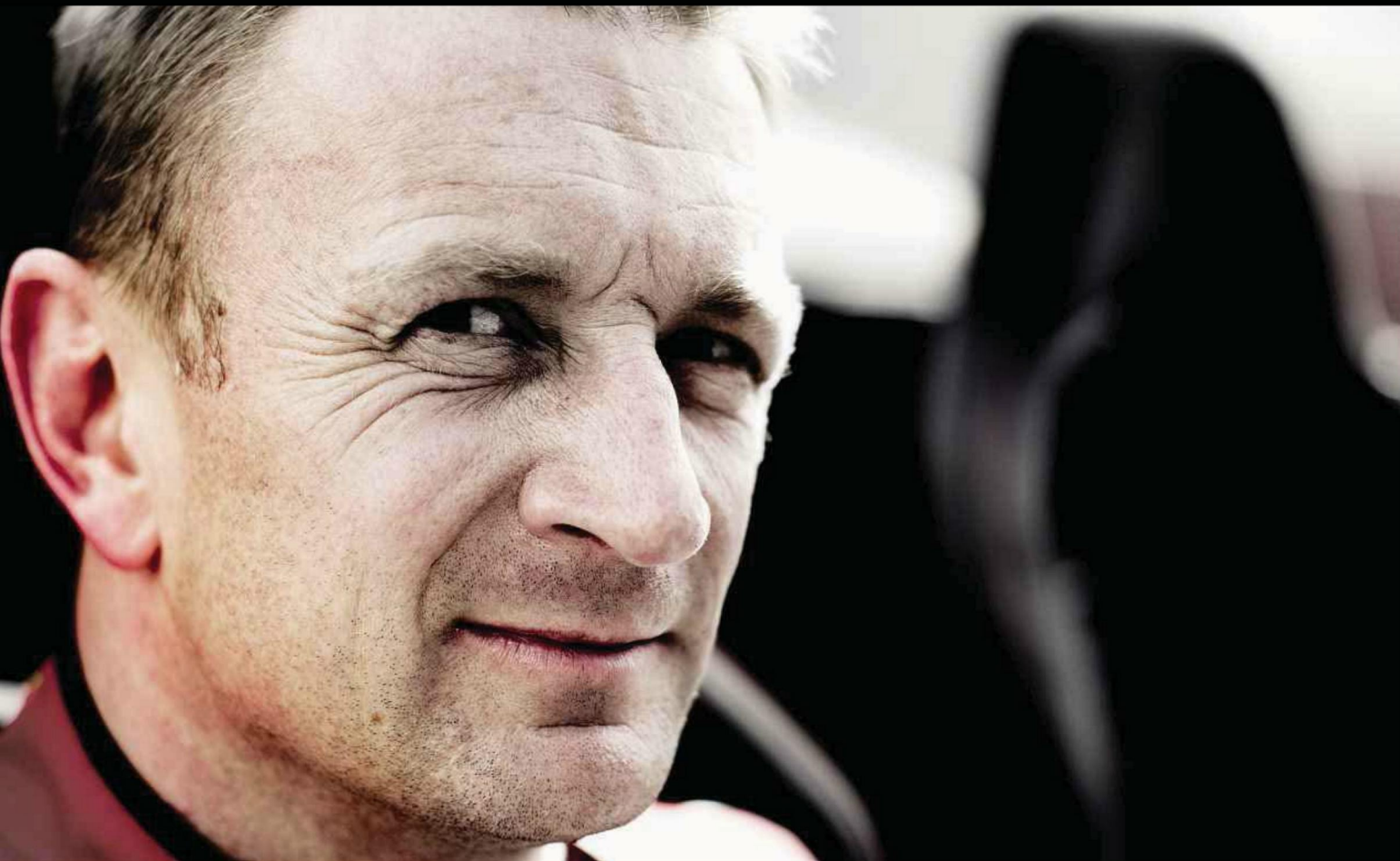
HIS FAVOURITE CORNER

■ I do like Arrabbiata Two at Mugello, because it requires some seriously large testicles in a fast car. You've just gotta get stuck into it. If you're meek and mild, you ain't going through there fast, because it's blind, it's up over the top of the hill... Sixth gear's your max – it's flat in fifth – and there's a lot of load on the car. I've had a tyre failure just at the top of there and you just think, 'Aww Christ almighty'. Also I like [the pasta dish] penne all'arrabbiata!

BEING A STEWARD IN F1

■ The thing that surprised me most, to be honest, was the amount of information they've got. It's so, so much more than what you have at home. It's incredible the amount of data and camera angles – it's very difficult to have any hiding place. I would go into a





IT'S NOT MAKING THE JIGSAW, IT'S THE FINAL PICTURE'



Above: McNish gets ready for a few (very) fast laps of Silverstone's Stowe circuit in an Audi R8 GT Spyder; see the video, complete with running commentary from the man himself, at www.evo.co.uk



steward's office with a different opinion now. They know a heck of a lot more by the time you walk in than you probably realise.

HIS STRENGTHS

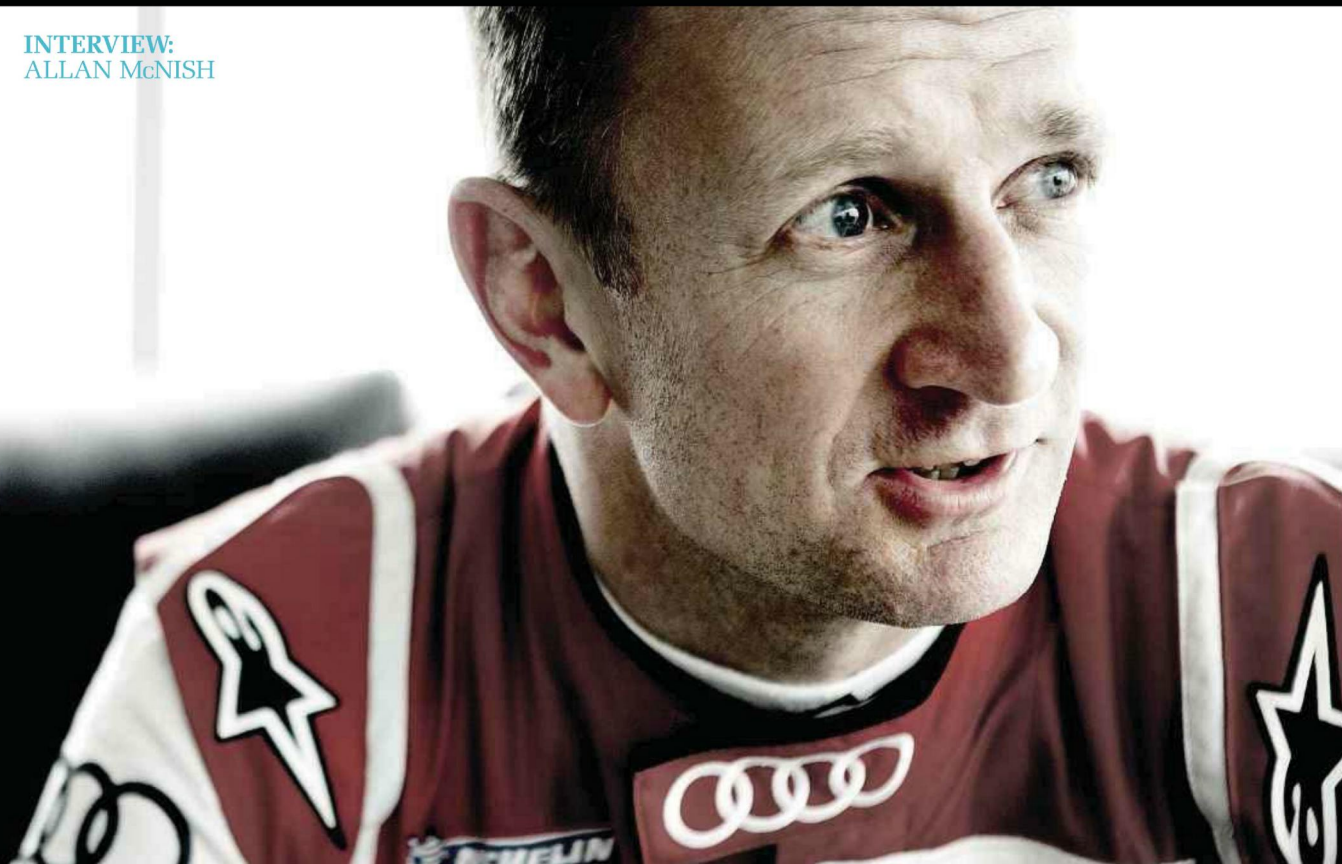
■ I think I'm good in overtaking. That's something that stems back from my karting. I could judge gaps and the way to do it relatively well. And I think that helps me a lot in a sportscar. The other thing is that by nature I'm reasonably driven in that I don't like to lose. And so I will fight to the bitter end in anything.

HOW TO OVERTAKE

■ The thing with overtaking is reading the situation. It's looking ahead and predicting what the guy ahead of you is going to do, so you've got to know who it is. In sportscars that's tricky because you get different drivers coming in and out of cars during a race, but you have to learn very quickly which cars are which and read the signals of what they're going to do. Especially with the closing speeds we have nowadays – they're huge so you can't necessarily just believe that he's going to do one thing. It's a risk assessment in a way: is it too risky or is it not? But for me the big thing is to look up, look through and look ahead of where you are. And when I'm coming up against traffic I tend to try and work out where I'm going to overtake them three or four straights beforehand. I don't just arrive there and think, 'Right, what am I going to do now?'

HIS FAVOURITE OVERTAKES

■ I've had a few. I had a sweet one – David Brabham overtook me round the outside at the first corner [at Silverstone] in F3 at



the British Grand Prix support race, and that did gut me quite a lot because we were fighting for the championship and I'd never been overtaken round the outside. Last year at Sebring I buzzed round the outside of him at Turn 5 and told him afterwards 'that was for 1989!' And he knew exactly what I was talking about! I don't bear grudges by the way...

Petit Le Mans 2008, overtaking Klien in the Peugeot into Turn 6, is probably one of them because that was just very opportunistic. It's a 90-degree right-hander with some positive camber, and although it's very quick – fourth gear – it leads into a very slow 90-degree right-hander immediately after. He got caught in traffic through the fast esses right towards the end of the race. I'd tried to get a run on him and couldn't with the traffic going into it. He braked in the middle of the circuit and I was down the inside before I'd actually sort of consciously thought of doing anything. It was just an instinct, 'go for it', and he didn't expect it at all. He was at the apex before he realised I was on his inside and it was too late by that point. That then broke the stride and I was able to get a couple of seconds' gap and keep it at that. In pure speed I don't think I'd ever have passed him and it was a decisive overtaking manoeuvre for the race victory.

RETIREMENT

■ I will need to replace the competitive side with another competitive side. That's just the way my make-up is. If I look at where I am today with my appreciation of cars and other things, I'll probably have a different appreciation in ten years, and so I would hope that then I could go out for a nice Sunday drive up to Sospel and enjoy it purely for the sake of enjoying it as opposed to thinking how the hell am I going to get there faster and get back faster.

HIS DREAM ROAD CAR

■ You're not allowed to take an R18 on the road, are you?! I've never been into Ferraris... I was thinking the other day of getting a



Scot McNish began racing in karts back in 1981. Today he drives for Audi and has four Sebring 12 Hour victories, three ALMS championships and (at the time we went to press) two Le Mans wins to his name



motorbike from the year I was born, 1969. Maybe a Laverda or a Moto Guzzi or something. But for a car it would again have to be something from an earlier era. I don't know at this stage what it would be.

SUPERSTITIONS?

■ No.

THE THRILL OF DRIVING

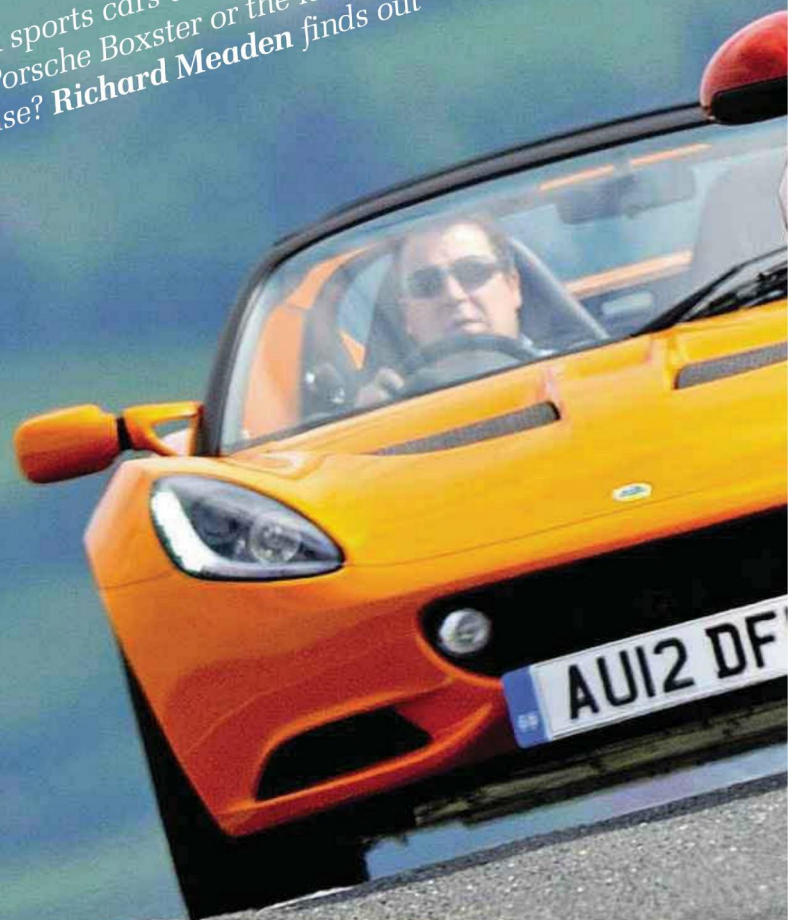
■ A car for me is the ability to be with yourself, to switch off and enjoy that sensation of doing what I love but on my own, without having anyone else involved. And that's where I think the racing car is the best thing, 'cos you've got a helmet and you are in your own zone, you're in your own area. No one can come into your world because if they do they're doing 200mph.



'IN A RACING CAR
YOU ARE IN YOUR
OWN ZONE. NO ONE CAN
COME INTO YOUR WORLD'

WINDY THRILLER

Which of these sub-£40K sports cars delivers the best open-top kicks, the all-new 2.7-litre Porsche Boxster or the latest supercharged Lotus Elise? **Richard Meaden** finds out



S





The bond between the Porsche Boxster and Lotus Elise extends way beyond their engine layout, open-air design and affordable (okay, semi-affordable) pricing. Both were conceived in the early '90s – troubled times for both brands – and launched to feverish acclaim within months of each other in the latter part of 1996.

Porsche openly admits the Boxster pretty much saved the company, or at least laid the fiscal foundations for the gargantuan money-making machine it has become today. By contrast the Elise's tremendous success failed to bring long-term financial security, but it's impossible to overstate its contribution to Lotus Cars, nor its achievement in bringing magical dynamics to the mainstream.

Their ubiquity and the horribly tempting prices of early used examples mean we've perhaps become a little blasé about the Boxster and Elise. It's certainly doubtful that anything launched by either Porsche or Lotus in the foreseeable future will match the frenzy that surrounded the debut of those original models. Still, the arrival of the all-new 981-generation Boxster and a

significantly revised Elise S rank amongst the more eagerly anticipated moments in *evo*'s 2012 calendar.

Our test starts with a trip to Porsche Cars GB's headquarters in Reading, where a Boxster awaits collection. It's a base 2.7-litre, 261bhp model fitted with the standard six-speed manual transmission and around £7000-worth of options. These include PASM adaptive dampers, 19in 'S' wheels, Porsche Torque Vectoring (PTV) with a limited-slip differential, satnav, bi-xenon headlights and a black leather interior. It's a nice spec that equates to a smidge under £45,000 in total.

Much has already been written in *evo* about the raft of improvements made to this, the third-generation Boxster, so I won't repeat it here. Suffice to say it's lighter (despite being a bigger car), quicker, more refined and more efficient. It's also very, very handsome thanks to a masterful mash-up of Carrera GT and 918 Spyder themes, plus a few design flourishes of its own.

The sun is out, so despite having to head straight onto the M4 motorway I decide to drop the roof. The electric hood now operates via a one-touch switch with no windscreen latches to release, so going topless is the work of a moment. The cabin, with the optional leather trim on seats, door panels and dashboard, is really appealing and very high quality. It's a pleasingly grown-up environment and creates an ambience that punches well above its price-point.

The engine sounds sweet and spins freely, its familiar sharp response and crisp exhaust note reinforcing the sense that this is a premium sports car in every respect. The gearshift of the six-speed manual is slicker and more precise than

the seven-speed found in the 991, and coupled to a light, smooth-biting clutch it makes for a car that's easy to bond with and drive smoothly from the off.

At 1310kg the new Boxster is a useful 25kg lighter than its predecessor. This helps make the most of the 2.7-litre flat-six engine's power and torque, but you're immediately aware that this is a brisk rather than genuinely fast car. It makes all the right noises, but if you're used to the snap of something like an E46 M3 or the grunt of a Focus RS, the Boxster is unlikely to blow your socks off, in a straight line at least.

Still, there's something very satisfying about the way the base Boxster goes about its business. It has terrific polish and offers amazing levels of practicality (it swallows an incredible amount of luggage) so you really don't feel like you have to endure any hardships to access the pleasures of a two-seater sports car.

Of course the previous Boxster was also blessed with a similar breadth of talents, but this new one adds another layer of sophistication, refinement and quality. We'll discover whether it ups its dynamic game to the same degree tomorrow, but on the evidence of this initial drive it's hard not to feel the Boxster is the most complete car in Porsche's model line-up.

A decade and a half of evolution has seen the Lotus Elise draw closer to the Boxster in terms of pricing and performance, a fact evidenced by the Elise S's basic list price of £36,200 – less than £1400 shy of the Porsche's. That came as something of a surprise to me, but not as much as the fact that, as tested, this range-topping, supercharged Elise also comes with a further £7000-worth of options. These include a £2100 Touring Pack (comprising assorted leather trim,

Above: 2.7 is the entry-level Boxster. Right: supercharged 'S' sits at the top of the Elise tree



PORSCHE BOXSTER
v LOTUS ELISE S



*'YOUR SENSES ARE FULLY
ENGAGED IN THE PROCESS OF
THREADING THIS FIZZY LITTLE
SPORTS CAR ALONG THE ROAD'*



'WITH THE STABILITY CONTROL OFF, THE PORSCHE BECOMES A MORE

embroidery, carpet mats, noise insulation panels, spotlights, iPod connection, cup holder and cruise control!), the £1800 Sport Pack (featuring firmer Bilstein sports dampers, lighter forged alloy wheels and more supportive sports seats), the £550 Black Style Pack (forged wheels in black, plus a black rear diffuser), £1100 for air-conditioning and another grand or so for the snazzy orange paintwork.

There's no more graphic demonstration of the essential difference between life with a Boxster and Elise than the first five minutes of any journey. The next morning, while Stephen Dobie wanders over to the Porsche, pops the front luggage compartment to stow his overnight bags, then jumps in and drops

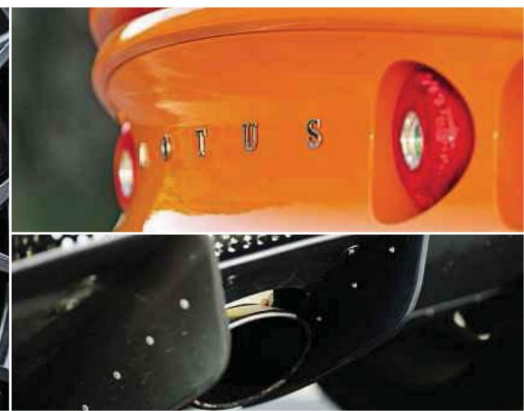
'S' is now shorthand for 'supercharged' across the Lotus range (confusingly, it used to mark out an entry-level, nat-asp Elise). Below: even with the Touring Pack, the Elise cockpit is still short on luxuries

the electric roof while simultaneously keying Crickhowell into the satnav system, I stand next to the Elise in a bit of a quandary. It's sunny, so I feel I really ought to remove the roof, but I'm not sure I've got time to disassemble it, roll it up and shove it in the rear luggage bay with my overnight bag (thereby relegating my laptop to the passenger seat) before Dobie and photographer Max Earey have left me for dust.

With no satnav (or map) I don't fancy my chances of negotiating Cheltenham blind, so I leave the roof on, fold myself into the spartan confines of the Elise's trademark aluminium tub and follow the red tail of the Porsche. Once in the Elise, it's a fun place to be: more exciting

and unconventional than the Boxster, and though your knees and elbows rest against sharper, less padded edges, the upside of this mild discomfort is a more intimate and sporting driving environment.

Like my first journey in the Boxster, these initial miles are hardly driving nirvana, but they are representative of real day-to-day motoring. The Elise takes them in its stride, but there's no doubt you'd need to be made of sterner stuff than your average Boxster driver to use the Lotus on a daily basis. The unassisted steering is light once you're on the move but requires a bit of muscle at walking pace, while the general road and wind noise levels are significantly higher.





EXPRESSIVE MACHINE, ALLOWING YOU TO PLAY WITH THE BALANCE'

It doesn't impede phone conversations on the move because there's no hands-free connectivity. That in itself is not a big deal, of course, but when combined with the restricted luggage space, comparatively fiddly roof and elevated noise levels it means you need to be prepared to put your life on hold while you're driving the Elise.

After a brief stop to finally remove the roof, we find ourselves on some quicker and more interesting roads. Here the Lotus is in its element. All the frustrations and distractions of missed phone calls and distorted music melt away, your senses instead fully engaged in the process of threading this fizzy little sports car down a twisting road draped

across a spectacular landscape.

The four-cylinder Toyota engine has never been the most charismatic partner for the Elise, but this new supercharged 2ZR-FE unit boasts more torque than the old motor in the outgoing Elise SC (up from 156lb ft to 184). It uses less fuel too, trumping the Boxster's 192g/km CO2 rating with a positively tree-hugging 175g/km. Revisions to the blower design mean it now generates a less dominant whine, so you get to enjoy more of the VTEC-style hardening of the engine note at high revs. Maximum power (217bhp) arrives at 6800rpm, so it still likes to be revved, but that 'charger also beefs up the mid-range, with peak torque achieved at just 4800rpm. Its buzz-saw

bark sounds a little sweeter with the roof off and provides the perfect soundtrack for this waspish sports car.

The Elise has put on some weight in the last 15 years (haven't we all?), but it still weighs comfortably less than a ton, so has proper get-up-and-go, cracking 60mph from a standstill in a claimed 4.2sec and punching hard in the intermediate gears. It always feels like it has the right intensity of performance, if that makes sense, with enough in-gear urgency to make it a rapid overtaking tool yet long-legged enough to hit its stride on fast, open roads.

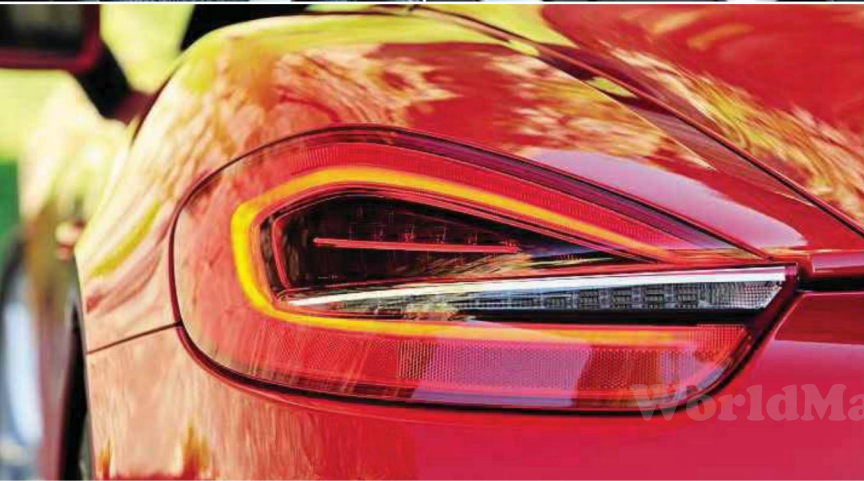
What really stands out is the clarity of feedback you get from the car and the accuracy with which you can place

Below right: Boxster cabin is far more luxurious; rising centre console mimics the Carrera GT's. Below left: standard brakes are all you need for fast road driving; carbon-ceramics would be overkill





'THE LOTUS THRIVES ON COMMITMENT AND RAW SPEED. YOU TEND TO FIND YOURSELF GOING LIKE THE CLAPPERS'





it on the road, even when driving close to its limits. The Yokohama Advans generate serious grip, so in most corners you simply nudge the little steering wheel and the nose darts to your chosen trajectory. It's an addictive process and one that encourages a neat, committed style. As you steal yourself to brake later and carry more speed into the heart of the corners, you enter that magical zone where the car seems to dance through the twists and turns, working all four corners in harmony with the road.

You rarely need to worry about oversteer, partly because there's an excellent stability control system, but also because the balance of weight distribution, available grip and torque is so well matched. Switch the electronics off and even if you do breach traction the open diff allows the inside rear wheel to spin. That means the tail won't be made to wag under power alone, but it can be brought into play on the brakes as a deft way of neutralising any understeer you might generate in a tighter turn.

The brakes themselves have the same Lotus hallmarks of progression and linearity, coupled with ample power and inspiring stamina. The pedals are perfectly placed for heel-and-toe downshifts, so a well-timed blip or two elicits the occasional smile-inducing pop and crackle from the exhaust. On proper driving roads like these the Elise S is sensational.

I'm still buzzing when I swap back into the Boxster. Yesterday I'd spent the hours immediately prior to my first exposure to the new Porsche driving my Fast Fleet



Top: Elise's leather 'ProBax' seats are optional. Above: Boxster's sports seats are standard, but full leather costs extra. Far left: Sport buttons relax the DPM (Dynamic Performance Management) stability system in the Lotus and make the throttle more sensitive in the Porsche

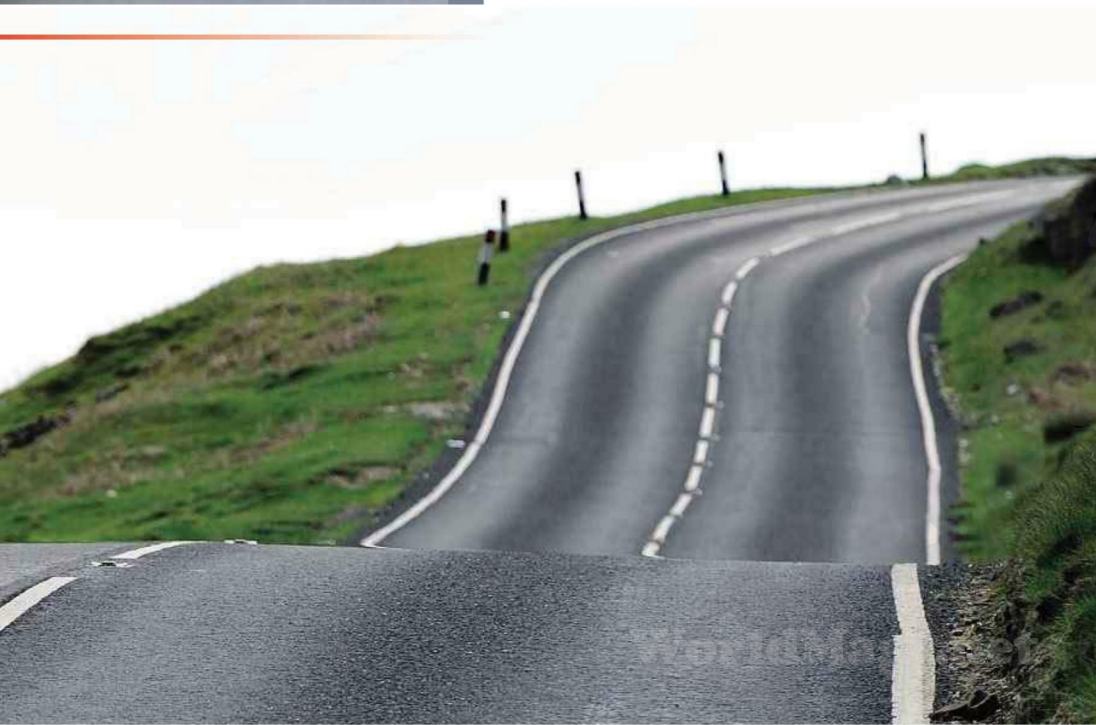
BMW 520d. Unsurprisingly, the Porsche felt quite compact and eager after that, but now, having spent an intense few hours haring around in the Elise, the Boxster feels big.

You notice instantly how much more of the road it fills, and how this reduces your options when scribing a line through a sequence of transient curves. You also sense a slight numbness to the steering (yes, it's electric...) that hadn't been so apparent when stepping from a less-than-sporting machine. It's less of an issue than it is in Power Steering Plus-equipped 991s, but still there's a small but discernible loss of connection over the previous model's hydraulic rack. It's not a disaster, but it does confirm that we can no longer look to Porsche as the absolute benchmark for the very best power steering, for now at least.

That lack of immediate acceleration is also a bit of a frustration, but with time you appreciate that the Boxster builds speed deceptively, thanks to longer-legged gearing and a less shouty engine. There's a decent spread of torque, with a peak of 206lb ft available between 4500 and 6500rpm, so as long as you keep the revs at a simmer you have access to all the Boxster's performance. Porsche claims a 0-62mph time of 5.8sec, which feels about right, while the top speed of 164mph sounds believable.

Thanks to PASM and a supple set-up, the Porsche flows where the Lotus ducks and dives, soaks up the punishment where the Elise's Sport Pack suspension will catch a sharp edge. That means the Boxster feels more composed and less intense, but it also means it never quite keys in to the tarmac as aggressively or connects you so completely to the action. Compared with the transparent, uncensored Elise, the Boxster filters its feedback more finely, with less 'noise' from bumps, cambers and coarse surfaces. It's almost as though you're holding the Boxster's big steering wheel wearing a pair of thick(ish) gloves.

Both cars give you great confidence on challenging or unfamiliar roads, but deliver in very different ways. The Lotus thrives on commitment and raw speed, so you tend to find yourself going like the clappers for 20 minutes before easing off to catch your breath. The Boxster prefers a less banzai approach. It has tremendous poise, hugely powerful brakes and tons of mechanical grip to lean on, but unlike the Lotus you find yourself pushing to 80 per cent and staying there, not because the car won't cope with harder driving, but because it feels more appropriate



PORSCHE BOXSTER v LOTUS ELISE S



Both Elise (top) and Boxster (above) had manual 'boxes in this test, but paddleshift transmissions are available for both cars – dual-clutch PDK for the Porsche and single-clutch SPS (Serial Precision Shift) in the Lotus

to find a spirited-yet-comfortable pace and sustain it. Much like the day-to-day practicality issues, it's this contrasting style of delivery that will be the biggest factor in deciding which of these cars suits you best.

With PSM (Porsche Stability Management) engaged, the Boxster is utterly benign and completely foolproof. Switch it off and it becomes a more expressive machine, allowing you to play with the balance under braking, just as you can with the Elise. It's not quite as direct or quick-witted as the hyper-alert Lotus, but this means it has greater progression and gives you more time to make your steering and throttle inputs. On a dry road the 2.7-litre engine struggles to trouble the rear tyres, but that means the Boxster feels well within itself at all times, which will doubtless suit most owners just fine. After all, if you want a Porsche that bites, £45K will buy you a nice used 996 GT3.

As you've probably gathered, picking a 'winner' from the Elise S and the Boxster is pretty much impossible, for though they cost the same money, occupy the same sector of the market and perform brilliantly in their own ways, they deliver completely different driving experiences. Such maturity means the Boxster is a

SPECIFICATIONS

PORSCHE BOXSTER

Engine Flat-six, 2706cc

CO2 192g/km

Power 261bhp @ 6700rpm

Torque 206lb ft @ 4500-6500rpm

Transmission Six-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive, PTV+LSD (optional), ESP

Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, PASM dampers (optional), anti-roll bar

Rear suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, PASM dampers (optional), anti-roll bar

Brakes Ventilated and drilled discs, 315mm front, 299mm rear, ABS

Wheels 8 x 19in front, 9.5 x 19in rear (optional)

Tyres 235/40 ZR19 front, 265/40 ZR19 rear

Weight (kerb) 1310kg

Power-to-weight 202bhp/ton

0-62mph 5.8sec (claimed)

Top speed 164mph (claimed)

Price £37,589

Price as tested £44,839

LOTUS ELISE S

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1798cc, supercharger

CO2 175g/km

Power 217bhp @ 6800rpm

Torque 184lb ft @ 4600rpm

Transmission Six-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive, ESP

Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers

Brakes Ventilated discs, 282mm front and rear, ABS

Wheels 6 x 16in front, 8 x 17in rear

Tyres 175/55 R16 front, 225/45 R17 rear

Weight (kerb) 924kg

Power-to-weight 239bhp/ton

0-62mph 4.6mph (claimed)

Top speed 145mph (claimed)

Price £36,200

Price as tested £42,400

★★★★★ EVO RATING ★★★★★

magnificent car, but its focus on all-round ability and useability inevitably means it falls short of the raw thrills, pace, involvement and excitement so readily served up by the Lotus. If you're after an adrenaline pump, the Elise S stands head and shoulders above the Porsche, but when you're simply driving rather than *driving*, the Lotus's uncompromising character makes

mundane mileage or long journeys little more than bearable.

Cars like these – perhaps more than any other – demand that you're brutally honest about what your life and driving style require. Kidding yourself will only lead to frustration, but give head and heart a fair hearing and buying either of these brilliant sports cars will be one of the best purchases you've ever made.

'EITHER OF THESE BRILLIANT SPORTS CARS COULD BE ONE OF THE BEST PURCHASES YOU EVER MAKE'

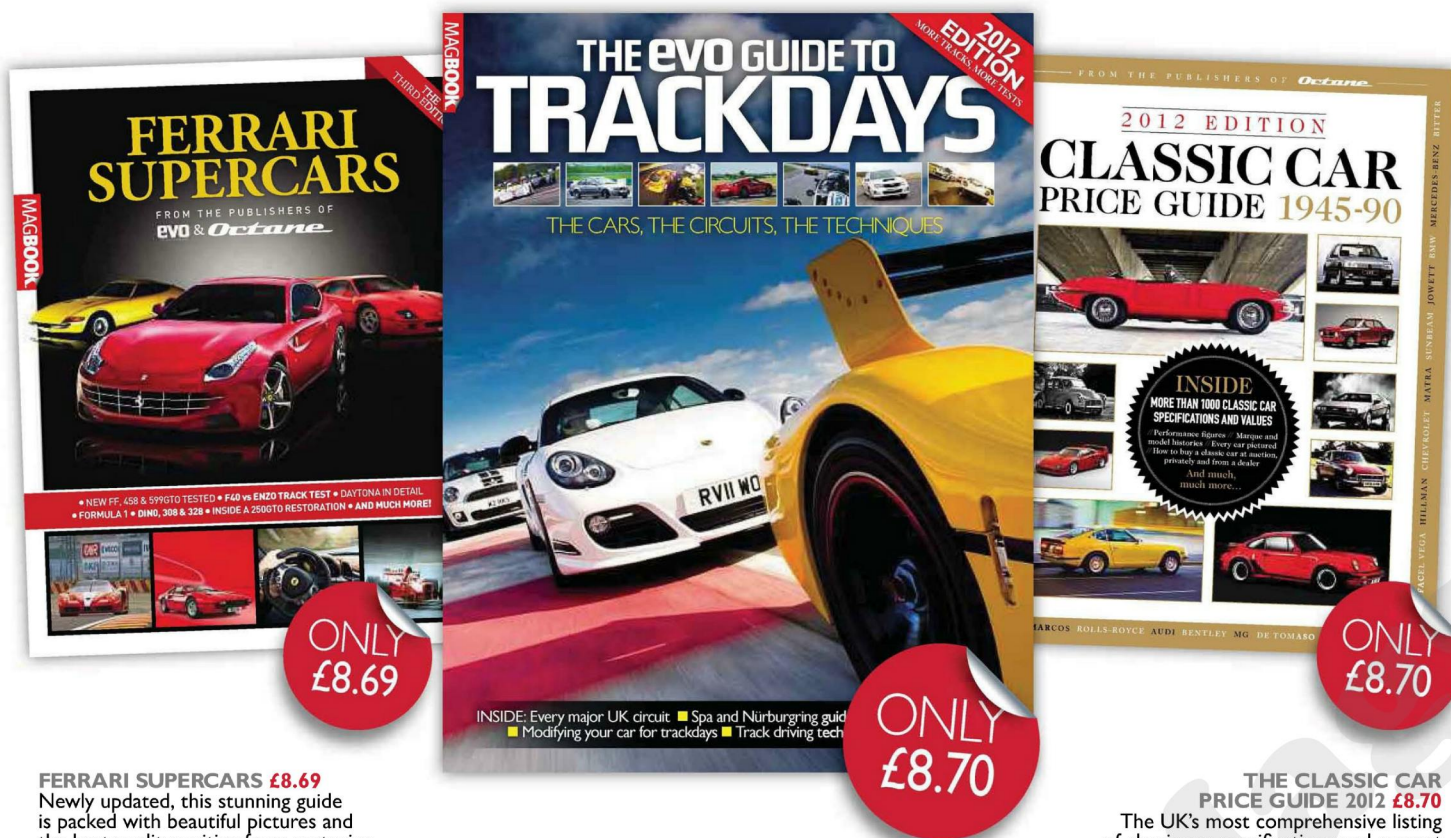


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evoFast Fleet



MINI JCW COUPE

Date acquired December 2011 Total mileage 14,949 Mileage this month 4125
Costs this month £0 mpg this month 33.2

I'd not suffered a breakdown since my T-reg SEAT Ibiza went pop after two years of teenage driving finally took its toll. Yet six weeks after the Mini had left snapper Dean Smith stranded when a loose coolant hose chafed and split, running the reservoir dry (not just a one-off, judging by emails I've received from Mini technicians), I was sat in a Bedfordshire lay-by with the wee 1.6's turbocharger unable to boost and making an ear-splitting noise as it tried.

Fortunately, a Mini dealer was within spitting distance. After a cautious 30mph crawl to get there, Elms Bedford diagnosed a damaged impeller – caused by a disintegrated rubber seal throwing itself inside the turbo – and I was given a courtesy car. The service was faultless, though W2 RKS had quickly been identified as a member of Mini's press fleet.

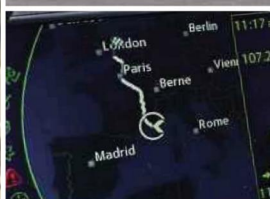
A new turbo was ordered and fitted under warranty in just two days, though it wasn't great preparation for a road trip to the south of France. But Mini United, held at Circuit

Paul Ricard in May, wasn't something I wanted to miss. I attended 2009's event at Silverstone (which helped celebrate 50 years of Mini production) and 2012 promised the same mix of stunt shows, festival music and track action, with the addition of some welcome 30-degree heat. The lengthy journey gave my car the opportunity to repair its shaken reliability record, too...

I travelled with a mate from another car mag, and with 1000 miles to cover each day either side of the weekend, we decided reluctantly to utilise France's slick autoroutes rather than one of the more stimulating off-piste options. Yet the Mini shone; its rock-hard ride was far happier on smooth

Above: 208bhp JCW Coupe lapped up the autoroute miles to the south of France (and back); the destination was Mini United

This month: Mini John Cooper Works Coupe Infiniti EX30d Suzuki Swift Sport Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16 Nissan 370Z Roadster Range Rover Evoque Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe Jaguar XF 2.2D Ferrari 550 Barchetta Renault Clio Trophy Volkswagen Golf GTI Edition 35 Jaguar XJR BMW 520d Efficient Dynamics Audi Q3



'THE JCW FEELS AT HOME TRAVELLING AT BIG NUMBERS, MAKING LONG JOURNEYS A DODDLE'



European tarmac, a 31mpg trip average was praiseworthy given our continental cruising speeds (and ensured 400 miles between fill-ups), while speed and satnav readouts were easily switched to metric – a simple but very helpful touch.

As I've mentioned before, the JCW feels at home travelling at big numbers, making long journeys like this one a doddle. The only major flies in the ointment (or splattered on the windscreen) were occasionally ambiguous satnav instructions and intrusive wind noise; at 80mph, the Coupe is less refined than a VW Up, and it's a little difficult to hear Bluetooth conversations or the posh Harman Kardon stereo.

Above right: kph speed readout proved useful. Top middle: on track at Paul Ricard. Far right: new John Cooper Works GP made an appearance next to an original

Inevitably, there was a much smaller British contingent among Le Castellet's 37,000 attendees than at Silverstone. Those who headed down in convoys of classic Minis were impressively dedicated, though crushingly, Countrymans outnumbered old-timers in the car park.

I'd been most excited to get on track, and unusually for such an event there was no fun-sapping pace car and overtaking was actively encouraged. What a shame, then, that the Coupe frustrated me. The titchy 1.2km loop being used meant we never got north of third gear, and its tight corners caused the Mini to scrabble its way around; it was difficult to avoid understeer into the

turns, and there was occasional oversteer to catch on the way out. Yet this car remains lots of fun on the road – it revelled in the twisty, tree-lined tarmac leading to Paul Ricard – so I'll reserve full judgment until I've attended one of *evo's* track evenings at the faster, more flowing Bedford Autodrome.

All in all, it was an ace road trip and not just for the novelty of copious beer consumption and raving to Birdy Nam Nam in the surroundings of an ex-F1 circuit. The Mini was a fine place to spend 2000 miles, and it covered them without complaint. Long may it continue – despite a host of flaws I really, really like this car. I would hate poor reliability to ruin that.

Stephen Dobie

evoFast Fleet



END OF TERM: INFINITI EX30d

Date acquired July 2011 **Duration of test** 10 months **Total test mileage** 24,992
Overall mpg 27.2 **Costs** £1254.04 (set of winter tyres) **Purchase price** £44,094
Trade-in value £35,000 **Depreciation** £9094

Our time with the EX30d has come to an end, and I have to admit I was really quite sad to bid farewell to a car that has played such a massive role in my life. Unlike some Fast Fleet cars, the Infiniti was genuinely every-day useable, and it certainly got some serious use.

The whole point of a long-term test is to find out what these cars are like to live with. I'm no amateur/pro racing driver and it was never part of the plan to drive the Infiniti constantly on the limit or see how it handles on a racetrack. As evo's film-maker, I used it to do long miles all around the country – a lot of motorways, dual carriageways and, predictably, plenty of time spent crawling in traffic, and often with piles of camera gear and car-cleaning paraphernalia piled inside. It even helped me move house. While Henry's Morgan is brilliant fun, I think it might have struggled with that sort of workload.

Infiniti describes the EX30d as the world's first coupe crossover, claiming that it blends coupe style with SUV practicality and

saloon-car refinement. It's a bold claim, but there's no doubt this is a flourishing market segment, especially since the arrival of the Range Rover Evoque. The appeal of these crossovers is that they have plenty of presence while being compact enough to give the impression of a smaller carbon footprint. The fact that they are all-wheel-drive is almost incidental. While they might allow owners to tackle the January snow, I doubt anyone would trade in their Discovery and expect the crossover to perform as a fully fledged off-roader.

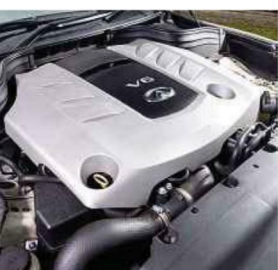
Rather than use its AWD for wading through swamps, the EX30d uses it to improve traction in all weather conditions (we added winter tyres for extra grip), allowing it to make the most of its 3.0-litre V6 diesel engine. It's quick, too: faster to 62mph than its closest rivals at 7.9 seconds. And refined with it. It just felt so comfortable, so compliant and so easy to get from one destination to the next.

It's not all good news though. An average mpg of around 27mpg is nothing special,



and while I loved cruising up and down the country, I came to dread having to fill up the 80-litre tank, especially after one brimful cost £111. I also found its cargo capacity rather disappointing. Our old long-term Skoda Fabia vRS had 480 litres of luggage space,

*'HENRY'S MORGAN
IS GREAT FUN, BUT I
THINK IT MIGHT HAVE
STRUGGLED WITH THIS
SORT OF WORKLOAD'*



Clockwise from left:
Connectivity+ pack
included nav; seven-
speed auto worked
well; interior robust;
motorways eaten for
breakfast; torquey V6

which put the Infiniti's 340 litres to shame. That's one of the prices you pay for the sleek styling. It was certainly robust, though, shrugging off everything we threw at it (and chucked inside it).

In GT Premium spec like ours, the EX30d has an impressive list of standard features, including leather, HDD satnav with touch screen and voice control, intelligent cruise, lane departure prevention, 10GB Music Box and my personal favorite, the 'every angle' parking cameras with 'birds-eye-view'. It took a while to trust the system, but with a bit of confidence it really did help.

The EX is a rare sight on the road and unlikely ever to sell in the same numbers as the Evoque, but I really liked the way it was relatively subtle while still being distinctively individual. And this is exactly what sums up this coupe crossover. It performs so well as an everyday car while at the same time having a big shot of character. It's not cheap – £44,094 on the road as tested in GT Premium trim – but the amount of technology and the overall quality of the build almost warrant the high price tag. Like I said, it's a very useable and extremely likeable car, and I'll miss it.

Sam Riley

SUZUKI SWIFT SPORT

Date acquired February 2012 Total mileage 5769 Mileage this month 1682 Costs this month £0 mpg this month 43.4

Been piling on the miles recently, with visits to family in Norfolk and Lancashire, and it's left me with slightly mixed feelings about the Suzuki. After a recent successful trip down the A1 to London, I figured a three-and-a-half-hour slog up the A1/M62 to Blackpool would be a doddle. However, by the end of the 400-mile round trip, the Swift had begun to grate on me somewhat. I'd better explain.

The intuitive Bluetooth system had proved extremely handy for keeping relatives up to date with my progress. The system features an SMS reading facility, which allows you to reply to messages with the computer translating your spoken word, although it can be very hit and miss, often mis-interpreting words. Similarly, the cruise control was extremely useful on such a long, dull drive and it's child's play to use, though using the device to adjust your speed up and (especially) down doesn't give particularly subtle or smooth results.

Despite having all these toys as standard, and as practical as they were, it didn't mask the fact that the Swift isn't made for lengthy motorway journeys, even with the



Above: **evo** designer Shorrock enjoying the Swift Sport (note: not a motorway in sight)

introduction of a sixth gear on the new-gen Sport, the constant drone of the 1.6-litre engine at 3000rpm becoming tedious.

Twisting roads remain the Swift Sport's natural habitat, no question, and it's very enjoyable indeed on these. However, the ride is more supple than its predecessor, and while it might manage bumps and ruts marginally better, it does tend to understeer more around corners.

By the end of the trip I wondered whether all the added kit, the extra gear and softer suspension had actually diluted what I loved about the old Swift Sport. You can't argue that having all this tech adds great value, but I'm not sure it's improved it as a drivers' car. The Swift has definitely grown up, but part of me wishes it hadn't.

Adam Shorrock

*'ALL THIS TECH ADDS GREAT
VALUE, BUT I'M NOT SURE IT'S
IMPROVED IT AS A DRIVERS' CAR'*



Above: more supple suspension has taken a little of the edge off the handling

evoFast Fleet

NEW ARRIVAL: MERCEDES-BENZ 190E 2.5-16

Date acquired May 2012 Total mileage 157,225 Mileage this month 305
Costs this month £5700 (car), £265.85 (insurance) mpg this month 26.5



NISSAN 370Z ROADSTER

Date acquired July 2011 Total mileage 15,611
Mileage this month 1262 Costs this month £0
mpg this month 25.4

The 370Z was designed from the outset to be both a coupe and a convertible, so Nissan claims there should be no dynamic compromise for drivers of the Roadster. This month I had the chance to put this to the test when I spent a couple of days in a hard-top Zed.

The coupe's body is clearly stiffer, so that

hint of shudder evident in the drop-top car on poor surfaces is absent, while the rear of the fixed-roof car seems to settle a fraction quicker when tackling a fast corner. It's subtle stuff, though, and though the Roadster is a touch less sharp handling-wise, it's no less satisfying to drive.

The coupe also had a manual gearbox. As a fan of swapping cogs the old-fashioned way, I thought it might make me wish our Zed wasn't an automatic, but after months with

the quick-shifting, paddle-equipped auto, the manual just seemed ponderous, and the pauses it created in the coupe's acceleration made it feel like a slower car.

Anyway, coupe or convertible; which would be my choice? Put it this way: I didn't find myself pining for a metal roof in the depths of winter, but with the sun shining and the temperature in the mid-20s as I write this, I'm very glad it's the key to the Roadster I've still got in my pocket.

Ian Eveleigh



Right: Ev compared our convertible Zed to the coupe alternative this month. Above: manual seems slow after the snappy auto



Strange, but true – it was the Subaru BRZ that brought me to the purchase of a 23-year-old Mercedes sports saloon. I spent most of my time on the BRZ group test we did back in issue 170 wondering just how a car with nearly 200bhp and a 1200kg kerb weight could feel as under-gunned as the Scooby did. And an extended contemplation brought me to the realisation that the 201bhp, 1360kg 190E 2.5-16 offered pretty much the same deal in terms of raw physics. By happy coincidence, it's always been one of my favourite cars.

I've got a fair bit of 'previous' when it comes to old Mercs, and it wasn't long before I was cruising the internet for likely looking candidates. Purely in the interests of research, you understand. And one car stood out a mile – a very smart 1990 2.5-16 being sold by a specialist in Keighley, Yorkshire. As coincidence had it, I would be driving past on the way back from a family holiday so could stop by to take a look. You can probably work out the rest – four days later, and £5700 poorer, I was driving it south.

Mark Taylor of MTSV, the dealer in question, is a man who knows his old Mercs – he's sold a couple of hundred – but he admitted that he seriously considered keeping this one for himself. With the later 2.5-litre engine (earlier cars had a 2.3) and the five-speed Getrag manual gearbox in place of the optional four-speed auto, the spec was right. And, although the 157,000 miles on the odometer prove it's no show pony, it came with a comprehensive service history including a receipt for a replacement engine five years ago.

Insurance was the first problem. Back in the day, the 16-valve 190E was a joyrider's dream, and a fair bit of the stigma seems to linger. Initial quotes, for a 5000-mile classic policy, ranged as high as £3000; this for a bloke in his late 30s with eight years of



'IT MIGHT BE A MODERN CLASSIC, BUT I'M PLANNING TO USE THE 190E AS IT WAS INTENDED'



Above: first stop for our latest Fast Fleet arrival was a trackday.

Left: leather was a £1249 option back in the day. Right: five-speed manual 'box was standard – and what Duff wanted



no claims. Fortunately, a nice bloke called Matthew at Adrian Flux came through with a far more reasonable £265.85, fully comp, against a £300 excess.

So what have I got myself? Well the non-cat 2.5-litre engine is claimed to be good for 201bhp and loves to rev; below 3000rpm it feels as staid as any old Merc, beyond 4000rpm it practically has a VTEC moment. The ride is soft by modern standards, but the steering feels great and the 190 has the

sort of low-speed throttle adjustability that modern cars just don't have.

It might be a modern classic, but I'm planning to use the 190E as it was intended. Its first appointment – after negotiating 200 miles of the M1 – was to attend an **evo** track evening at the Bedford Autodrome. It felt brilliant for the first three corners. And then, ahem, the brakes overheated.

Still, at least I know what the first job on the list is.

Mike Duff



RANGE ROVER EVOQUE

Date acquired March 2012 **Total mileage** 7101
Mileage this month 2274 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 32.5

As some of you may be aware, now and again I like fooling around on two wheels of the non-motorised kind. Unfortunately I haven't yet worked out a satisfactory way of fitting one, let alone two bicycles into the Morgan. Ships and bottles spring to mind.

Anyway, the Peak District and some mountain biking with cousins beckoned, so Mike Duff let me borrow the Evoque. The bikes fitted easily in the back, although as Victoria Beckham didn't exactly design the Rangie's interior to be hosed down, I did spread out numerous old blankets and towels to keep muddy tyres off leather.

They say you can't find a straight line



Evoque carried two mountain bikes with ease, but looked out of place in the Peaks

in nature, and the Evoque's slanting slashes stood out wildly against the soft countryside of the Peaks. When I parked it next to an old 110 Defender outside my cousins' slightly ramshackle farmhouse, it looked like Sputnik had touched down.

Five-year-old Ben was quite taken with the electric tailgate, although his father grumbled about Cheshire being the other side of the hill. And I know what he means. I like the Evoque a lot, but it's a Range Rover that doesn't look at home in the countryside.

Henry Catchpole

MERCEDES C63 AMG COUPE

Date acquired April 2012 **Total mileage** 6012 **Mileage this month** 1033 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 18.4

What's fascinating about the C63 is that its personality and character are so far removed from the standard C-class coupe's that the two cars may as well be completely separate models. The styling – so conservative in lesser variants – never fails to attract positive attention. And mine, with its matt-black/silver-lip wheel combo, looks particularly sharp. Indeed, 'sharp' sums up this AMG's appearance – more Bangle than Benz perhaps?

Drive a lesser C-class coupe and you would never believe that the AMG version could be as desirable as a 911 or an Aston Martin V8 Vantage, but that's how I'm beginning to feel about the C63. Both the 911 and V8 Vantage are pure of character – unmistakable from anything else. But then so is the C63...

It is not an M3, and neither is it a muscle car (although it combines attributes of both). As I've found this month, it is a brilliantly effective long-distance companion and yet if you want to take to the B-roads it offers access to interaction and driver thrills unbecoming of something so bluntly powerful. Take it to a circuit and you have access to fantastically controllable slides thanks to the optional LSD.

Niggles? I can't set the seat low and flat enough for my liking, and there's a slight rev mismatch on

Right: auto 'box lives in manual mode. Below: Trott tries out the limited-slip diff at the Bedford Autodrome



'IT'S AS DESIRABLE AS A 911 OR V8 VANTAGE'

manual shifts down from third to second. Last month I incorrectly stated that the C63 uses the same twin-clutch gearbox as the SLS – it doesn't. It has the same number of gears (seven), but no torque converter and a single wet-plate clutch for start-up. On the road, the auto function is smooth, but I now instinctively flick the control dial to 'M' whenever I get in the car, simply to give me access to all manner of sound effects from the exhaust as I change gear. My favourite is a *flwap!* noise, then repeated, as you upshift on full throttle at around 4000rpm. In many ways this personifies the driver/car relationship – you spend most of your time looking for new and innovative ways in which to enjoy that glorious drivetrain.

Nick Trott



JAGUAR XF 2.2D

Date acquired Dec 2011 **Total mileage** 20,690 **Mileage this month** 1685 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 34.8

I'm not old enough and I don't play golf! That's all I could think when I discovered that I would be running our XF long-term for the rest of its time with us.

My first drive was after a particularly stressful day at the office, and as a big fan of hot

hatches, the thought of climbing into a company director's carriage to get me through the rush-hour traffic was not appealing.

The waft of leather, the sprinkling of veneer and the suede headlining were exactly what I expected. But I have to admit I was intrigued as I pressed the starter button and twisted the cylindrical gear selector.

I started to ease myself into the

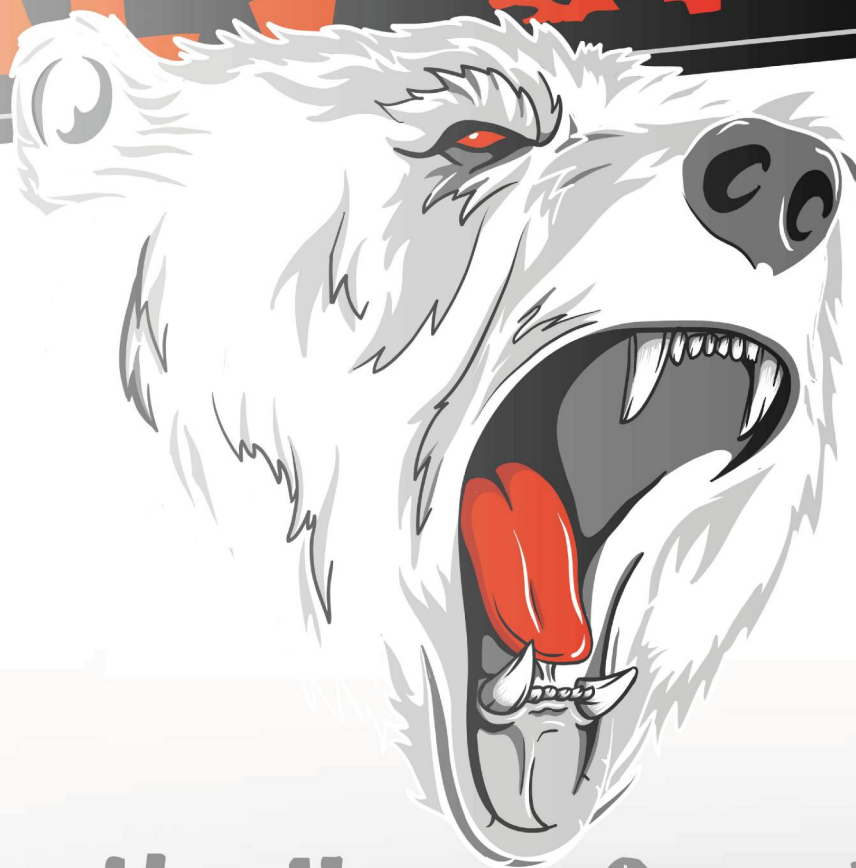
journey, setting the seat in a relaxing position, getting the steering wheel just right. Then the Jag did what it does best: it got me from A to B in sheer comfort. I could feel my blood pressure lowering with every mile...

As someone who lives in the modern world with all the stresses and strains that come with it, this car is exactly what I need. I just didn't know it.

Paul Lang



Lang winds down from a tough day at the office by cruising home in comfort in the XF



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AUDI Q3

Our Q3 seems to have almost every option box ticked, meaning it comes with some interesting driving aids, the worst of which must be High Beam Assist. Audi says it 'can decide for itself when it is sensible to use the main beam headlights'. In the real world you'll be blinding oncoming traffic one minute and unable to see more than 30ft on unlit country roads the next. Technology, eh?

Dean Smith

VW GOLF GTI EDITION 35

Lotus test driver extraordinaire Matt Becker had a quick go in our GTI when we were up at Hethel for last month's Esprit megatest. His feedback? 'Ride is a tad firm and steering not that well connected.' I can live with the ride because in every other way the Edition 35 is just such a great all-rounder. Still loving the howling drivetrain, too. Jethro Bovingdon

BMW 520D ED

The 520d has been wearing a groove in the road to the Nürburgring with two trips in the last ten days. Such journeys are the long-legged BMW's real forte, thanks to its refinement, comfort and 650-mile range. Stay below 90mph and it'll tick along at an easy 52mpg, but push a bit harder (in Germany, naturally) and it'll drop into the high 40s. Steer away from the Autobahn and the 5-series covers the ground really nicely, the modest Eco-spec tyres giving it a supple ride, satisfying fluidity and readily accessible limits. Throw in some rain and it's genuine fun.

Richard Meaden

RENAULT CLIO WILLIAMS

With the risk of Born Free rescuing the Williams from its underused captivity and letting it run off into the sunset, Shorrock and I are planning a road trip to keep it feeling loved. A tour of Scotland's wondrous roads awaits, inspired by reader Christopher Frew's Highland Hoon in issue 171. First, though, a health check-up courtesy of its annual service. Full report next time.

Stephen Dobie

JAGUAR XJR

As I ponce about in other people's cars and my own Fiat 500 TwinAir, the Jaguar languishes at the back of the BBC underground car park. I've even thought about putting a car cover over it, but such a blatant act of storage would attract unwanted attention from Auntie's heavies. There's only one thing for it: I fear the XJR will have to be sold...

Richard Porter



HARRY'S GARAGE: FERRARI 550 BARCHETTA

Date acquired April 2007 Total mileage 10,740 Mileage this month 601
Costs this month £2148.52 (cambelt service) mpg this month 18.8

When is the cut-off point in a car's life when you stop having it serviced by the main dealer (to preserve its perfect service record for resale) and swap to using an independent instead?

It's something I ponder regularly. I'm so rubbish at selling cars I end up owning them forever, and I find it tricky to break the main dealer habit. It's easy with stuff like my Elan Sprint and Lotus 340R. The Elan would be a mystery to most 'technicians' in a modern Lotus dealership, while the 340R doesn't do the miles to justify major service work, so I just treat it to an annual oil and filter change and leave it at that until something goes pop. I'm told the K-series is a delicate lump

and likes to throw regular 'hissy fits', yet my 340R has been a paragon of reliability since it first snarled into life more than 11 years ago.

That's not the case with the Countach, though, which develops

'THE 550 BARCHETTA IS STILL AN EXILE IN ITALY'

'issues' on a regular basis. The latest one is a tiny leak from the driver's side fuel tank. Mike Pullen, at Carrera Sport, soon diagnosed it as being due to corroded alloy. Seems Lamborghini thought it

was a good idea to put a steel strap around each tank, but the steel reacts with the alloy over time and pinprick holes are the result. You have to strip the suspension to get the tank out, so it's a job I'm leaving for the winter.

Meanwhile, the Ferrari 550 Barchetta is still an exile in Italy and as it needed the cambelt service doing this year, I booked it in to be done by the Ferrari dealer in Prato, near Florence. The bill came to €2701.68 (£2150), which is around the same as it would cost at a UK Ferrari dealer. The Italian dealer charged only €60 per hour labour (a lot less than in the UK) but took longer to do the job, so the labour charge came out about the same. If the Barchetta was in the UK, I'd be using a specialist for servicing by now, but in Italy I'd rather leave it to the Ferrari dealer network.

Finally, the Clio Trophy needed an MOT this month and passed with no advisories. Once it was back home, I whipped the catalyst off and replaced it with the straight-through, cat-bypass pipe that came with the Scorpion RS192 exhaust system I fitted a few months ago. The result is a raspy snarl from the twin big-bore tailpipes under load and a huge grin on the driver's face – I love this little car lots.

Harry Metcalfe



Left: Clio Trophy sailed through its MOT. Above: 550 was serviced in Italy; hourly labour rates are lower but the job took longer, so the bill was the same as it would have been at a UK main dealer

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WHAT'S THE EVORA S LIKE ON TRACK? **evo**
COMPETITION WINNER MARTIN PASS REPORTS



Champion
UK

The final hurdle in the competition to write what you're reading now was an interview with James Haskey of Lotus and some bloke called Nick Trott. I remember an early question being: 'What is the most important part of any car?' After a few fumbled seconds of thought I opted for a safe 'the chassis', but I've since found out I should have said 'the tyres'. I'd put this incident out of my mind until I found myself at my local dealer, Lipscomb Lotus in Kent, back in March with 'my' Evora S up on the ramps having four out-of-season Yokohama W-Drive winter tyres removed and four shiny new Pirelli P Zeros fitted.

It was a cracking opportunity to have a poke around and under the car, and also to check out a Sunbeam Lotus belonging to one of the mechanics – very cool. It was great chatting to the guys at the dealership – real 'evo' people – and I couldn't wait to get the car back on the



floor and try out the new rubber.

As expected, the summer tyres sharpen things up nicely, with the most notable difference being at the rear. It's as if it's been stiffened against roll and the old sensation of the treadblocks shuffling across the surface is gone. It definitely serves to raise the confidence you have in the car's mid-corner reactions. Up front the nose feels as keen as ever to turn in and there's a lovely sensation as the outside front loads up, bites into the road and keeps the car on your aggressively chosen line. The left-right shuffle under heavy braking has been cured too. These new high limits of adhesion were begging to be explored. Luckily I was booked on the first **evo** trackday of the year.

It was my first time at the Bedford Autodrome and if there was ever a circuit on which to learn what happens at and beyond



'THE INSTINCTIVE BALANCE MAKES THE CAR INCREDIBLE FUN TO THROW AROUND'

a car's limits, this is it. Flat, well-surfaced and with acres of run off – which I have to admit to using once or twice...

It was brilliant to see the eclectic mix of motors arriving for the evening's session. As well as track regulars such as Caterhams and 911s, there was everything from a SEAT Ibiza to an Ariel Atom. I even saw a diesel 3-series on track, which I'm quite sure was returning more than the Evora S's indicated 4.6mpg!

On the circuit the Lotus coped brilliantly, with the brakes going a little soft after a



Now wearing summer tyres, the Evora held its own amongst the variety of machines taking part in a recent **evo** track evening

few hot laps but never failing me, even with the stop from 140mph on the back straight. It's obviously not an out-and-out track machine but the instinctive chassis balance and compliance make the car incredible fun to throw around. There's not a hint of intimidation and as a result you become lured into later and later braking followed by earlier and larger throttle openings. The rear is nicely mobile on the brakes and the front end simply doesn't do understeer. The Evora really is a friendly machine to drive quickly.

There was a large contingent from the magazine present, and Jethro Bovingdon was kind enough to do a few laps in the Evora and drift it beautifully through the last corner – something I'd tried earlier with considerably less success!

I've done a few trackdays but none have been as slick and relaxed as the day at Bedford – I can't wait to get back there later in 2012. Before then, though, my next visit to a circuit will be to Le Mans in June to see the pros at work. I'm sure I'll see plenty of you there.

SPECIFICATION

LOTUS EVORA S

Engine V6, 3456cc, supercharged
Power 345bhp @ 7000rpm Torque 295lb ft @ 4500rpm 0-60mph 4.6sec Top speed 172mph
EC mpg 28.7 Price £60,550 exc. OTR costs
On sale Now



356 A Coupe £84,995
Silver Metallic
Red Leather Seats
UK Supplied Right Hand Drive Car
142,000 miles
1958



911 GT3 (1997) £61,995
6-Speed
Jet Black
Black Half Leather Sport Seats
19" GT3 Wheels
11,000 miles - 2007 (57)



911 Carrera 2 S (1997) £59,995
GEN II PDK
Meteor Grey
Black Leather Seats
Switchable Sports Exhaust
15,000 miles - 2009 (59)



911 Carrera 4 S (1997) £38,995
6-Speed
Meteor Grey
Black Leather Seats
Satellite Navigation
38,000 miles - 2007 (07)



Boxster RS60 Spyder £29,995
6-Speed
GT Silver
Carrera Red Leather Sport Seats
19" Sport Design Wheels
5,000 miles - 2008 (08)



Cayman S £22,995
6-Speed
Guards Red
Black Leather Seats
18" Cayman S Wheels
17,000 miles - 2006 (06)

356 C Cabriolet £109,995
Ivory White, Red Leather Seats, 108,000 miles

911 Turbo (1997) £56,995
Basalt Black, Black Leather Seats, 18,000 miles

911 Turbo (1997) £49,995
GT Silver, Cocoa Leather Seats, 35,000 miles

911 Turbo (1993) £49,995
Silver Metallic, Black Leather Seats, 53,000 miles

911 GT2 (1996) £49,995
Polar Silver, Black Leather Seats, 37,000 miles

911 Carrera 2 S (1997, GEN II) £46,995
Arctic Silver, Black Leather Seats, 26,000 miles

911 Carrera 2 S (1997) £34,995
Seal Grey, Blue Leather Seats, 35,000 miles

Boxster S (1987 GEN II PDK) £34,995
Basalt Black, Black Leather Seats, 6,000 miles

911 Carrera 2 S (1997) £29,995
Arctic Silver, Blue Leather Seats, 54,000 miles

911 Carrera 4 S Cabriolet (1996) £27,995
Seal Grey, Black Leather Seats, 47,000 miles

911 Carrera 4 S (1996) £26,995
Polar Silver, Black Leather Seats, 19,000 miles

911 Carrera 4 S (1996) £24,995
Arctic Silver, Grey Leather Seats, 35,000 miles

Cayman S £24,995
Basalt Black, Black Leather Seats, 48,000 miles

Cayman S £22,995
Arctic Silver, Blue Leather Seats, 36,000 miles

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ASK THE EXPERT

Q I am thinking about buying a manual 2009 DBS in gunmetal grey with the B&O pop-up speakers. Is this a wise move with the new car about to be launched? And as the majority of DBSs are autos, will my choice of manual hurt residuals? Finally, what should I expect to pay? **David Mather**



Used DBS values shouldn't be adversely affected by the arrival of its replacement

A First off, don't worry about the residual value of a manual DBS. You're buying this car for you, not the next buyer. The fact very few recent DBSs were ordered as manuals only makes a manual version rarer, and there will always be someone like you who wants a manual 'box. Even when the DBS first came out, autos outnumbered manuals three to one, so the choice is more limited anyway.

You should be paying around £88-95,000 for an '09 model, depending on mileage, and I wouldn't worry about the launch of the new model – it won't be that much more desirable than the current DBS because it will look very similar to a casual observer. In fact, because the new DBS will inevitably be more expensive than the outgoing one, it could help keep second-hand DBS values that bit stronger. **HM**

GOT A QUESTION FOR OUR BUYING EXPERT?
email experts@evo.co.uk

MARKET WATCH



PUG A LEASING LEADER

Peugeot coupe amongst this summer's best personal car lease deals

New car sales tend to slow at this time of year, with the registration-change peak of March long gone and buyers thinking about paying for the summer holiday instead. That's why now is a good time to check out personal leasing rates, as manufacturers often offer leasing companies great deals to try to keep car sales strong.

I was surprised to find new BMW M3s on offer from Silverstone Fleet Management for £571.18 per month, with a £3427 initial payment, on a 30-month deal based on 8000 miles a year. Compare that to West Way Leasing's offer on a Nissan GT-R, which asks for an initial payment of £7812 followed by 35 monthly payments of £1302, based on 10,000 miles a year. That makes the deal on the M3 look great value.

The real bargains, though, are to be found lower down the performance-car hierarchy. Take the pretty (and good to drive) Peugeot RCZ, which 1st Choice Vehicle Finance can supply in 1.6 THP GT trim for an initial payment of £883 followed by £294 per month on a 24-month, 10,000-mile agreement. Or you could bag an Abarth 500 from Bauer Millett Alfa for an initial payment of £773

followed by 35 monthly payments of £258, based on 10,000 miles per year. Seems like excellent value to me.

Even better are fleet-type vehicles, like a Mercedes C220 CDi Blue Efficiency Estate, which can be yours for £1857 followed by 35 monthly payments of £279 (10,000 miles a year). And if you're after seriously cheap transport then how about a Citroën C1 1.0i VTR five-door, available from Citroën Slough for just £78.99 per month (£1000 initial payment, 24 months, 5000 miles a year).

Finally, it's always worth checking out the deals on convertibles, as they tend to have better residuals than tin-tops, making the leasing costs cheaper. I found drop-top VW Golfs available for £800 followed by 35 monthly payments of £262 (10,000 miles a year). That should keep the missus happy while you go off and bag something a whole lot more exciting!

Harry Metcalfe
Editorial director



Auction watch



BX 4TC is a particularly rare homologation special, and this example is one of the best

Lancia and Citroën Group B cars amongst the lots at this year's Le Mans Classic sale

Group B cars have been coming back into fashion in a big way, with some of the most popular fetching huge money – a Peugeot 205 T16 road car recently sold for £112,000 at a UK auction. French auction house Artcurial is holding its annual sale at Le Mans Classic on July 7, and amongst the lots are two more eye-catching Group B machines

The first is a road-going Lancia

037, the mid-engined, rear-drive homologation special. This fine example, finished in red, is expected to sell for £70-120,000.

The other car is a Citroën BX 4TC. This black example – the last ever built – has been sitting in the private collection of Heuliez (the French coachbuilder responsible for making the 4TC) for over 20 years. The guide price is £24-48K – quite a bargain.



Just 207 road-going versions of Lancia's 037 Group B car were built

Other noteworthy cars in the same sale include a 911 Carrera 2.7 RS at £96-128K, and various iconic Le Mans racers, including a 1991 Peugeot 905 (£560K-£1m) and a 2007 Audi R10 TDI (£1m-£1.2m). **Matthew Hayward**

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MERCEDES E320 CABRIOLET £9995

Vendor 4 Star Classics, Bramley, Surrey, GU5 0LN
www.4starclassics.co.uk 01483 274347

There can be few better ways to waft around in the summertime than in a 'W124' E-class Cabriolet. Even the youngest example will now have passed its 15th birthday, but this is still a car that gives off an effortless air of class. And this one, being sold by 4 Star Classics in Surrey, is a properly solid example.

With time doing its reaping there are fewer decent E-class Cabrios to choose from, with the market mostly split between cheap, tatty ones and immaculate minters going for £15K and up. Which is why this 1993 E320 stands out, with the right engine (the creamy straight-six), the right colour (two-tone green) and being in smart – although some way short of concours – condition.

On the move, it delivers effortless waft, a decent turn of speed and a surprisingly snarly soundtrack; 218bhp was quite a bit back in the day. You're never going to chuck it around, and structural rigidity isn't great, but the build quality feels as sturdy as ever, with no clonks or creaks: 110,000 miles is barely run-in for one of these things.

Having a four-speed auto rather than the optional five-speeder is the only real hole in the spec. There's no air-con either, but why would you need that?

Mike Duff



E320 Cabriolet still looks good and this example is in great condition and keenly priced. Left: period switchgear is as solid as ever



SPECIFICATION

Year 1993
Mileage 110,000
Engine In-line 6-cyl, 3199cc
Max power 218bhp @ 5750rpm
Max torque 229lb ft @ 4000rpm
0-62mph 8.0sec (claimed)
Top speed 142mph (claimed)

SUMMARY

EXTERIOR

» Some repaired stone-chips, but no rust on the front wings (a W124 weak spot)

INTERIOR

» Looks and feels great

MECHANICALS

» Loads of history shows that this one's been well looked after

VERDICT

» Honest version of one of the '90s' best cabriolets – perfect for summer

ALSO FROM THIS DEALER

BMW E30 M3 CONVERTIBLE

£24,995, 1990, 87,000 miles
» Gorgeous example with loads of history
PORSCHE 928 S4
£17,495, 1988, 55,000 miles
» Very tidy, in '80s-must Guards Red

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LOTUS ELAN S4
1970. Unusually finished in British Racing Green metallic. Related history going back to early 80s. Always enthusiastically maintained - not immaculate paint but, a good sound, useable car. A very attractive price.....POA



LOTUS ELAN S4
1970 Beautifully restored throughout, sitting on a replacement Lotus chassis. Its dazzling red coach work and unmarked, restored interior make this a very desirable example.....POA



Lotus Elan S4 DHC
Well known, nicely prepared hillclimb, sprint and road car. Excellent history file. Benefiting from a very strong 1760 TC. Mag gear box. LSD, 26R spec chassis, etc. It is an extremely well presented, forgiving, competitive car. Ready for work at a fraction of construction costs.....POA



Lotus Europa JPS Limited Edition
Number 18 of 100 produced. This car has had a fantastic restoration, just completed. The car has been in pieces since 1985. The car is complete with original service voucher book and MOTs. Finished in the usual black and gold with sumptuous oatmeal interior and all the hard bits to find are present on this car.....£29,950



Lotus Elite S1
1959. After spending some time with a collector in Germany, the car returned to the UK in 2002. It was then rebuilt, to include a fresh Coventry Climax unit mated to a ZF close ratio gear box, twin 40 DCOE carbs, FA 5001-2 camshaft, etc. The body was also fully refurbished. The car has only covered approximately 700 miles since.....£39,950



Lotus Elite S2 Climax
Extensive restoration by previous owner to include rebuilt engine (Tony Mantle) rebuilt body (Tony Bates) 2F gearbox. Chrome wires. Subtle modifications to make the car useable. A work of art.....£63,950



CATERHAM 7
1800 VVO Roadports 2001. 11,000 Miles only from new. New Wide Track suspension and adjustable coil over, LSD, full leather interior, Momo quick release wheel. Stunning example.....£15,950

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ASTON MARTIN DBS VOLANTE £124,950

Vendor Top 555, Rutland, LE15 7AA
www.top555.co.uk 01572 774830

A £10,000 Mercedes is one route to convertible motoring this summer. A £125K Aston Martin is bordering on the absolute opposite. And no matter what your views on the DBS's dynamics (undoubtedly a little hampered by the drop-top's 115kg gain over the already portly coupe), this Lightning Silver example, complete with diamond-turned wheels, is utterly beguiling in the metal.

It's practically brand new, and even though its first owner hardly clocked any miles, he certainly gave the options list a workout. One of the most desirable options for DBS Volante buyers, Aston's Touchtronic automatic gearbox, is present and correct, alongside leather sports seats, piano black interior trim and an Alcantara-trimmed steering wheel. The interior's as immaculate as those low miles would suggest, and it's a wonderful place to be.

The Touchtronic 'box isn't as slick as rival carmakers' automatic transmissions, but when it's attached to such a glorious 12-cylinder engine, you don't really mind.

This DBS cost over £190K just 3600 miles ago, and is one of the cheapest Volantes currently on sale. £125K is still a lot of money, but with the roof down and all 510bhp on song, it'll feel worth every penny. **Stephen Dobie**



This DBS Volante's colour scheme and wheel design look spot on. With only 3600 miles on the clock, it's all in top-notch condition too



SPECIFICATION

Year 2010
Mileage 3600
Engine V12, 5935cc
Max power 510bhp @ 6500rpm
Max torque 420lb ft @ 5750rpm
0-60mph 4.3sec (claimed)
Top speed 191mph (claimed)

SUMMARY

EXTERIOR

» Save for a couple of stone-chips, it's perfect. Glamorous wheel and colour combination

INTERIOR

» As new, with lovely leather sports seats

MECHANICALS

» Touchtronic gearbox might not be the drivers' choice, but that V12 is glorious

VERDICT

» Terrific saving on new, and a fabulous way to enjoy the summer (when it finally arrives!)

ALSO FROM THIS DEALER

PORSCHE 997.2 GT3 RS

£104,950, 2010, 2000 miles

» Only Guards Red example, White Gold decals

LAMBORGHINI GALLARDO

£74,950, 2004, 7900 miles

» Yellow, e-gear, full Lamborghini history

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evo Buying Guide

THE INSIDE LINE ON BUYING USED



CATERHAM 7 ROADSPORT

*Not as extreme as the Superlight models, the Roadsport family of Caterhams is perhaps the best compromise between thrills and useability. **Peter Tomalin** is your guide*

No car encapsulates the thrill of driving quite like a Caterham. But which to choose? It's nearly 30 years since Graham Nearn bought the rights to the Series 3 Seven from Colin Chapman, and to the uninitiated those three decades have produced an almost bewildering number of variants. So let's keep things (relatively) simple. What we're looking at here is the recent generation of Roadsport models, which arrived in the mid-1990s and present an excellent entry point. In fact for many of us here at *evo*, they're the pick of the range.

The good news? There are loads to choose from, a wide choice of engines and power outputs, and, as with virtually all

Caterhams, if you buy wisely, depreciation will be somewhere between minimal and non-existent. There's also a healthy trackday and competition scene for all levels of ability, a thriving online community and a well-tested network of specialists.

The bad? There isn't any really, but at risk of stating the bleedin' obvious, these are heavily compromised cars that very few could countenance as an everyday vehicle. With the hood and sidescreens attached they're tricky to get into, and once you're in they're pretty cramped, although there are larger-bodied versions for the, erm, larger bodied. An Elise is refined and habitable by comparison. But then not even an Elise is such sheer bloody good fun as a Seven.

So what's the particular appeal of the Roadsport? Back in 2007, we drove the then-new entry-level Roadsport 125, powered by the 125bhp 1.6-litre Ford 'Sigma' four, in our Road & Track Car of the Year feature (*evo* 105). Even with a ballistic R400 for company, it captivated us. After numerous laps of Cadwell Park and the surrounding roads we concluded it was 'proof that modest power is no bar to entertainment and involvement', adding: 'It really is a gem of a sports car, with a perfect match of grip and go that is just as much fun on track as on road.'

The beauty of the Seven is, of course, its simplicity. Whichever version you choose, you get a steel-tube frame clad in aluminium bodywork, with wishbones at the front and



a de Dion tube at the rear (even the basic Classic abandoned the live rear axle some years ago). Interiors and equipment levels are rudimentary, though the Roadsport does at least give you a heater as well as a full-size screen and full weather equipment. The Roadsport's arrival in 1996 also coincided with the introduction of the 'long cockpit', which soon became standard across the range (pre-1996 Caterhams can be a real squeeze for anyone over 5ft 10in).

The main differences are the powerplants. Traditionally, Sevens were Ford-engined, but the early 1990s saw the introduction of the Rover K-series to the range. In 2001 Caterham designated MG Rover sole engine supplier for factory-built Sevens (though Ford Zetec engines were still used in kit versions at the time). So you'll find plenty of K-series-engined Roadsports, ranging from 1.4s with just 105bhp, through 1.6s with 115bhp, to 1.8s with anything from a standard 140bhp (a particular favourite of ours) to the potent 165bhp VVC version.

When Rover collapsed in 2005, it meant a

The Roadsport 125 pictured here has a 1.6-litre Ford Sigma engine (top), but various Ford and Rover units have been used over the years; cockpits (above right) are always cosy



CHECKPOINTS

» It's rare for Sevens to do more than 5000 miles a year, and owners are generally fastidious, so if the car you're viewing looks anything less than well-loved, walk away. Don't be afraid of cars that weren't factory-built; the SVA test that a home-built car has to pass is extremely thorough. There's no need to steer clear of cars that have been used on track either – they're very much at home there, providing they've been serviced and maintained accordingly.

ENGINE

» With only around 500kg to move, both Ford and Rover engines are unstressed and generally reliable, even when tuned. The K-series has a reputation for head gasket failure, but largely through its installation in the MGF and Freelander; it tends not to be such a problem in the Seven, and though it's not unknown, if it's spotted early the consequences are seldom serious.

TRANSMISSION

» Gearboxes are either the Ford T9 five-speeder or Caterham's own six-speed 'box. The T9 is fine – cheap and durable – but the six-speed is perfectly matched to the Seven, and particularly desirable to get the best out of the smaller K-series engines. It is normal for there to be some transmission noise transferred through the chassis. Make sure that cars advertised as having a limited-slip diff actually have one! Jack up the back of the car and turn one wheel – the other wheel will rotate in the same direction if it does have one (or the opposite direction if it doesn't).

SUSPENSION & BRAKES

» Caterhams are extraordinarily sensitive to suspension set-up so it's well worth having the car set up properly once you've bought it. This can be tailored to both how you drive and even how heavy you are! Pads and discs last a very long time, even when used regularly on track.

BODYWORK & INTERIOR

» The bodywork is entirely aluminium and composite, so no rust issues there, but the space-frame does rust, so check carefully that there are no signs of perforation and that the powder coating is sound. Look out for small cracks in the bottom corners of the windscreen, caused by people leaning on it as they get in and out of the car.



'I BOUGHT ONE'

Barry Donaldson

» 'When I started buying car magazines there was this little aluminium and GRP kit car that kept wiping the floor with pretty much everything else. One day I drove down to Caterham's HQ, and after loitering around the showroom for a while, I was asked if I'd like to be taken out in one. That was me smitten.

Eventually I was in a position to get my hands on one. I scoured the classifieds and narrowed my search down to a very nice Supersport that had started out with a 1.4 Rover K-series but had been upgraded to a 1.8. It also had the six-speed gearbox.

That was two years ago and I've never looked back. Oh yes, it's impractical. It's also cramped, noisy, draughty, a bit scary in the wet and has the turning circle of a supertanker. But on the right day, on the right road, there is simply nothing else I can think of that I'd rather be driving.

I've had a couple of technical problems, but nothing major. Parts, information and plenty of advice are freely available out there on the internet.

Would I ever go for something more "sensible"? As long as I'm agile enough to get in and out of my car, I'll be sticking with it, thank you very much.'

finite supply of K-series engines, so Caterham reintroduced Ford power, initially with the 175bhp 2-litre Duratec, later joined by the 1.6-litre Sigma engine, in 125 and 150bhp guises. These remain the staple of the Roadsport range today.

The Ford units tend to be a bit torquier, but all of these engines are well-suited to the Seven, and even the humblest K-series delivers more than enough power to zip you past dawdling traffic and – on wet roads – keep you on your mettle.

Some other variations to consider – the SV is the wider, longer, bigger-bodied and 25kg heavier version introduced in 2000 (as a

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THAN ENOUGH
POWER TO ZIP YOU
PAST TRAFFIC'*

£1000 option) to accommodate drivers over 6ft. Then there's the Supersport, basically a tuned-up, more stiffly suspended Roadsport. The rare Tracksport is, as its name suggests, a more hardcore, trackday-oriented car. And while we're on the subject, don't rule out ex-Academy cars. Based on the Roadsport, these ex-racers make great trackday toys.

If you're still not convinced, you can hire a Seven for a day directly from Caterham, which has a fleet of Roadsports, including the wide-boy SV, based in Surrey, the Midlands, Yorkshire or – if you're feeling brave – Scotland. Cost is from £175. Be warned though – you could develop an itch you simply have to scratch.

SPECIFICATION

- » Roadsport 125 (2007-present)
- » **Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1595cc
- » **Max power** 125bhp @ 6100rpm
- » **Max torque** 120lb ft @ 5350rpm
- » **Weight (kerb)** 539kg
- » **Power-to-weight** 236bhp/ton
- » **0-60mph** 5.9sec
- » **Top speed** 112mph (claimed)
- » **Price when new** £18,495 (2007)

PARTS PRICES

- » Supplied by Caterham Cars. Tyre prices from blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT at 20 per cent
- » **Tyres (each)** £39.89 front and rear, 185/60 R14H Toyo Proxes
- » **Brake pads (front set)** £46.20
- » **Brake discs (front pair)** £47.88
- » **Front dampers (each)** £144.00
- » **Clutch** £234.00
- » **Exhaust** £342.00
- » **Oil filter** £9
- » **Spark plugs (set of four)** £15.60

SERVICING

- » Prices from Caterham Cars
- » **Regular service (years 1 and 3)** £325
- » **Intermediate (year 2)** £525
- » **Major service (year 4)** £705

WHAT TO PAY

» The cheapest Caterhams you'll find in the classifieds tend to be the Roadsport's predecessor, the Super Sprint from the late '80s and early '90s, with the cross-flow Ford 'Kent' engine. These start at around £7K, rising to £10K and more for a really nice example with all the right bits. Just check you fit, as they don't have the longer body that arrived with the Roadsport.

The cheapest Roadsports are around £11K, often ex-Academy cars, which makes them trackday naturals. £12-13K buys you a decent basic K-series car. A factory service history adds value. Desirable options include the six-speed 'box, vented front brakes, limited-slip diff, quick rack for trackwork, and a removable steering wheel. Caterham itself usually has a good selection of Roadsports, with prices starting from around £15,000.

USEFUL CONTACTS

- » lotus7club.com (owners club, including Caterhams)
- » blatchat.com (forums)
- » caterham.co.uk (new and used cars, tech support)
- » jameswhiting.com (parts and servicing)
- » uksportscars.com (sales)

IN THE CLASSIFIEDS



- » 2004 1.6 Academy
- » 2000 miles
- » Built for 2004 Academy race series, only raced three times, dry-stored since
- » autostradacars.com

£13,995



- » 2001 1.6
- » 22,800 miles
- » 138bhp, yellow, black wings, six-speed, wide track, big brake kit
- » woodcote sportscars.com

£15,450



- » 2001 1.8 VVC
- » 18,000 miles
- » Amethyst Blue with silver stripe, six-speed, factory built, two owners, full history
- » uksportscars.com

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CAMBRIDGE MOTORSPORT PARTS RACE BATTERY £420

WWW.CAMBRIDGEMOTORSPORT.COM

Measuring little over 11cm square, the latest Ballistic EVO2 battery from Cambridge Motorsport Parts is ideal for race and track cars, its size and light weight making it easy to package. Despite its diminutive dimensions, the lithium pack delivers 28AH and 500 cold cranking amps.

WHEELWRIGHT ALLOY WHEELS FROM £198 WWW.WHEELWRIGHT.CO.UK

Wheelwright has added some new rims to its line-up aimed at the prestige car and SUV markets. The Calibre Altus (top) takes design cues from the firm's original-equipment rims and comes in five sizes from 19 to 22in. Big SUVs are the target for the Dotz Territory (bottom) which has been engineered to cope with the extra weight. There are 19, 20 and 21in versions; prices start at £312.



ASK THE EXPERT

Q I am wondering how many readers, after your review of the Clio Raider in *evo* 167, now believe that a larger tyre gives a larger footprint? Only the load acting upon the tyre and the inflation pressure can change the footprint size. Even if the tyres on the Raider's larger wheels are wider than the normal Clio 200 tyres, there will be no change in the footprint size, only its shape, i.e. a bit wider and shorter.

Bertie Redfern

A If we drove on simple inner tubes then you would be absolutely right, and inflation pressure is an essential part of the equation, but modern tyres are surprisingly complex.

The reinforcement in a tyre carcass transmits force to a wider area inside the tyre than just the contact patch. Plus the sidewall also supports some of the road load, more so with lower profiles. But as the tread blocks cover less than 100 per cent of the contact patch, the ground pressure under them can actually be much higher than the inflation pressure, just to add to the confusion.

Also, the overall equation changes as the tyre heats up – and as speed changes too. Mathematical models are becoming increasingly complex as more is discovered about tyre behaviour.

In summary, wider tyres *do* have more contact area, but a tyre twice as wide does not have twice the area. It's a (complex!) law of diminishing returns. **Ralph Hosier**

GOT A QUESTION FOR OUR TUNING EXPERT?
email experts@evo.co.uk



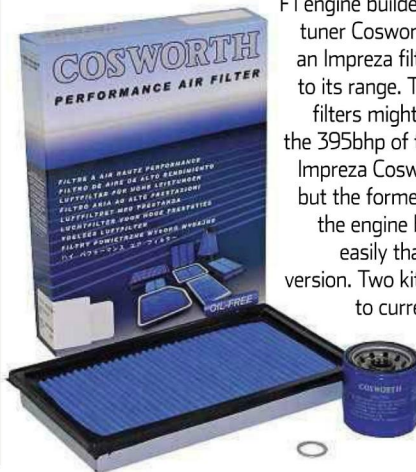
REVOLUTION REMAPS

FROM £299 WWW.REVOLUTION-REMAPS.CO.UK

Gateshead-based tuning parts retailer Revolution Motorstore has launched a remapping service, Revolution Remaps. Its maps are written specifically for your car, with power and torque gains of up to 35 per cent claimed, along with a 10-20 per cent improvement in fuel economy. There's currently 15 per cent off – just mention *evo*.

COSWORTH FILTER SERVICE PACK FOR SUBARU IMPREZA £45 WWW.COSWORTH.COM

F1 engine builder and Subaru tuner Cosworth has added an Impreza filter service kit to its range. The air and oil filters might not give you the 395bhp of the scorching Impreza Cosworth CS400, but the former should help the engine breathe more easily than a standard version. Two kits cover 1993 to current Imprezas.



TRIED & TESTED

OSRAM LEDRIVING INTERIOR LIGHTS FROM £12.99 WWW.OSRAM.COM

» LEDs are becoming increasingly popular for exterior car lights, but I've been trying some new LED options for interior lighting. Osram has produced LED versions of three common cabin fitments – C5W, T4W and W5W – as direct replacements for the standard filament bulbs. Two colours are available: Warm White at 4000 Kelvin and the 6000-Kelvin Cool White I tried. Fitting was simply a matter of removing the OE bulb and slotting home the LED W5W (£24.99 a pair). The difference is striking. You really notice how much better you can see with the much brighter and whiter LEDs. The only problem is that Osram needs to extend the range, as the LEDs make the other interior lights look very second rate.

Kim Adams



Below: Osram's LEDs provide brighter, whiter interior light

TUNER PROFILE

IAIN LITCHFIELD OWNER, LITCHFIELD IMPORTS LITCHFIELDIMPORTS.CO.UK



» 'It's John Barker's fault that I started in this business because I'd read an article of his on a Monster Miata [MX-5] V8 in the US and I thought there must be a market for it over here, so I got a loan and bought a car. It was a disaster, but I learned a lot! We don't sell as many cars as we once did but we have a lot of happy customers who come back for servicing and upgrades. We're just wrapping up our latest Nissan GT-R project, and we're doing a Juke too. Next it will be the Subaru BRZ and Toyota GT 86 coupes – we've got lots planned for those.'

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RING RIL3200 INSPECTION LAMP £54.99 WWW.RINGAUTOMOTIVE.CO.UK

Make light work of looking after your car with this new inspection lamp from Ring. Punching out a mighty 1200 lux of light from just six LEDs, it has also been designed to give a wide beam. The lithium-ion battery is good for four hours on full power while the low-power, 325-lux mode gives up to eight hours' use.

GUNSON SMART BATTERY ALERT

£15.62 WWW.GUNSON.CO.UK

The first you usually know that the battery on your rarely used classic or track car is flat is when you want to use it – but not with this neat gadget from Gunson. Connected to the battery terminals and secured with the supplied cable ties, there is no need for regular checks as it gives an audible alert when the voltage drops below 12.2 volts.



VALETPRO ARGUS LEATHER AND VINYL CREAM £9.60 WWW.VALETPRO.EU

ValetPRO has added a vinyl and leather cleaner to its growing consumer range. It comes in a 500ml button spray which can be diluted 3:1, making it one of the cheaper solutions on the market. Just spray and wipe to remove ingrained grime.



T-CUT SCRATCH AND RUST MAGIC PENS £7.99 WWW.T-CUT.CO.UK

Don't let those stone chips and scratches spoil your car's bodywork – put them right with these new pens from T-Cut. Rust Magic converts the dreaded brown stuff into a prepared surface ready for paint in 15 minutes. Just dab on and wait for it to turn blue. The Scratch pen deals with marks by covering them in a durable, protective coating and can be used on all colours.



ASK THE EXPERT

Q I have a 2010 Bentley Continental Supersports, which has carbon-ceramic brakes. The brakes make a grinding noise when in use, and while I understand that carbon-ceramic brakes tend to do this, I have noticed that other Supersports I have seen on the road don't. There is also a constant squeaking noise from the back, which sounds like an un-oiled trolley wheel. I have been told that this is normal and within Bentley's noise tolerances. What do you think? Most of my driving is done in central London.

Cho Ng



Left: carbon-ceramic brakes might be a little bit noisy, but a constant squeak isn't normal

A Carbon-ceramic brakes offer improved braking because they have a very hard-wearing disc material that can cope with a more aggressive pad surface, which provides more friction. The disc material is basically a mixture of rock and chunks of metal. This can make a grinding noise, which is worse when the pad has been scuffed up by repeated very hard braking. Usually a few gentle brake applications is enough to quieten things again.

As most of your driving is in town I'd be surprised if you had this problem. Instead it could be a slightly worn disc surface if the car has done a lot of miles, or it might have picked up some contamination, but it is probably perfectly normal.

Squeaking is a different story. The pads are very lightly in contact with the discs when you are not braking, but there are mechanisms in the design to reduce the chance of the pads vibrating as you drive and producing high-frequency noise. They really should not squeak. That sounds more like contamination or a piece of road grit has got trapped. I had a chat with the guys at Bentley and they suggested you visit a reputable dealer to get it properly looked at.

Ralph Hosier

TRIED & TESTED

AUTODAB DIGITAL RADIO ADAPTOR £187 PLUS APPROX. £25 FITTING WWW.AUTODAB.COM

» Looking for digital radio in your car but want to keep the cabin standard? Look no further than the new AutoDAB interface. Essentially it is a black box that hides behind the dash and plugs into the standard loom between the FM aerial and the head unit.

As it slots into the wiring harness, steering-wheel sound-system controls can be used to control the DAB output. If your car doesn't have wheel controls there is an infra-red version with a remote, which we tried. A button-sized receiver is the only visible sign inside the car and this can be mounted out

of sight. Both systems use a powered, earthed, screen-mounted aerial.

The digital signal is supplied direct to the tuner via an FM modulator and you can still hear FM stations simply by switching the AutoDAB off. The remote works quickly, although you do have to be pretty accurate in pointing at the receiver. There are up to 30 station presets or you can simply scroll through the alphabetical list with the names displayed on the head unit via RDS.

It works well, particularly on the national stations like the BBC, and sound quality is excellent. Local station reception is a little more erratic, but generally the amplified aerial works well.

A discreet solution to getting DAB radio in your car.

Kim Adams



Remote control allows you to switch between the AutoDAB unit's stations



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FERRARI F12 FROM £134.99 WWW.PAGEANDCOOPER.COM

Ferrari gave its full blessing when BBR asked to build a scale model of the F12, and actually gave the model manufacturer unhindered access to a real F12 so the model could be as close to perfect as is possible. Available in both 1/43 and 1/18 scale, in a range of colours, these stunning models are being made in very limited numbers – only a few hundred per colour.



PAGANI HUAYRA £265.00 WWW.PAGEANDCOOPER.COM

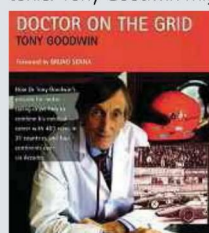
The new Pagani Huayra – the star car of this month's *evo* – is an incredible feat of engineering, and this hand-built 1/18-scale model captures it in perfect detail. This model is an exact replica of the 2011 Geneva show car, and is finished in that bright metallic red paint that captured the public's imagination.

BOOKS

DOCTOR ON THE GRID: TONY GOODWIN

£35 WWW.MRPBOOKS.CO.UK

» In an era where F1 teams face budget caps of £40million, reading about grassroots racing from a simpler time makes for a refreshing tonic. Tony Goodwin might not be a household name, but his



autobiography is a fascinating tale charting a 60-year motorsport career that weaved around his life as a doctor. Older fans of racing will revel in the peppering of names like Cooper, Brabham and Chevron throughout the narrative, whilst there is a lesson here for youngsters weaned on Bernie Ecclestone's unashamedly corporate view of F1.

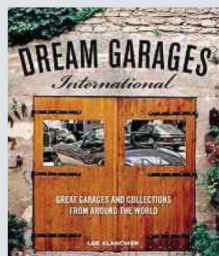
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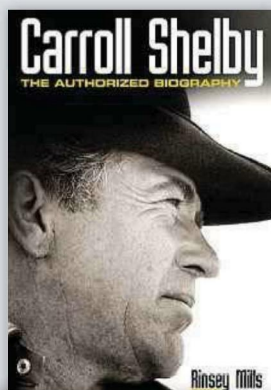
£25 WWW.MOTORBOOKS.COM

» All of us have sat during an idle moment imagining how to fill our lottery-win garages. But how often have you thought about the garage itself? Lee Klancher's book focuses mainly on the architecture, layout and decor of some very impressive garages, warehouses and museums, with details of the cars they house coming a close second. It serves as a window into 'how the other half live', in a style that would be familiar to readers of country lifestyle literature. Klancher does well to give extra detail in his annotations for the decent photography, but really the appeal here lies in marvelling at the fanatical end of the car enthusiast spectrum.

James Howe



BOOK OF THE MONTH



CARROLL SHELBY: THE AUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY

£25 WWW.HAYNES.CO.UK

evo was saddened to learn of the recent passing of Carroll Shelby. By bolting the all-American Ford V8 into the compact and lightweight British AC Ace, Shelby instantly created a hot-rod legend, but there was so much more to the man. This book by motoring author Rinsey Mills chronicles the entire life of his close friend: his school days, learning to drive in a WWII Willys Jeep, time spent as a chicken farmer, his motor racing career (which was ended by heart problems) and his later work with the Carroll Shelby Foundation (which helps children with coronary problems). In fact, it's the most complete record of Shelby's life ever written, and a close-up and personal one at that.

Matthew Hayward



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» The 1930 Le Mans 24 Hours was absolutely overrun by British drivers and cars, with the overall win going to Woolf Barnato and Glen Kidston in the Bentley Speed Six. This tee re-imagines the period posters, picturing the no. 8 Supercharged Bentley – a car that, incidentally, didn't finish the race!

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» In a similar vein to the 'Dab of Oppo' T-shirts that became so popular last year, this slightly tongue-in-cheek 'Oversteer Addict' design is one of our favourites... but then, given the opportunity, most of us are somewhat partial to a bit of tail-out action! Certainly one for anyone with a sense of humour and a rear-drive car.



TSUKUBA

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WWW.T-LAB.EU

» The small but perfectly formed Tsukuba circuit is situated in the heart of Japan, and is the spiritual home of the country's drifting scene. In the competitions held there, points are awarded for style, tyre smoke and even crowd reaction, as well as accuracy. This simple but striking design pays homage to the iconic circuit.

CATCHPOLE'S VIEW

'IN THE STILL OF THE NIGHT, YOU HAVE THE TARMAC TO YOURSELF'

It's the deserted, post-apocalyptic world that comes round once every planetary revolution. When the world has gone to bed and the roads are deserted, this is my favourite time of day to drive. When the last journey home from the pub has been made but before the first farmer has risen from his slumber, there, in the quiet still of the night, you have the privilege of the tarmac to yourself.

A star-studded firmament and a moon like a heavenly Hella lamp are the preferences. Countryside cloaked in a pale, silvery sheen with the occasional lake gleaming like a mirror in the valley below.

The freedom to explore while not being held up by the bimbles and the bumbling, the delivering and the deliberating, is blissful. I'm not alone, of course. My eyes are on stalks, scanning the darkness, looking for the reflections of retinas in the hedgerows.

And through it all rumbles, gurgles and scythes the SLS Roadster. Splitting the night with a V8. Cool air floods into the cabin when a red traffic light forces a pause. Then the Silver Arrow is released into the empty night once more. I'm glad I got the late ferry back to Holyhead.



Henry Catchpole
Features editor



GREAT DRIVES

B660, BEDS/CAMBS

When we want to put a new car through its paces – or simply go for an enjoyable blast – we head for the B660. Here's how to find it

Bedford to Ramsey St Mary's (via Kimbolton and Glatton) sounds more like something from a pre-Beeching-era railway timetable than the basis for a great drive. But this journey of 34 miles runs like a backbone through not only Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire, but

also the archive of road tests from *Performance Car* and *evo*.

Emerging from north Bedford, the B660 sweeps briefly along an open section, high up (for Bedfordshire) on a ridge, before heading back down into a 40mph limit. The road then rears up a fearsome ramp of a hill and

you find yourself high again, with a water tower standing proud on the horizon. From here it continues to meander towards Kimbolton, and at this stage you'll probably be thinking that it's a good route without being spectacular.

Wiggle through the village, however,

EVENTS CALENDAR

JULY

» **5-9 July** Le Mans Classic Tour
www.continentalcartours.co.uk

» **6-8 July** Le Mans Classic
www.lemansclassic.com

» **8 July** Modified Live, Brands Hatch
www.modifiedlive.co.uk

» **20-22 July** Silverstone Classic
www.silverstoneclassic.com

AUGUST

» **5 August** Wilton Classics and Supercars
www.wiltonclassicsandsupercars.co.uk

» **25-26 August** Pentillie Festival of Speed, Cornwall
www.pentilliefestivalofspeed.co.uk

MORE EVENTS AT
WWW.EVO.CO.UK/EVENTS

READER'S ROAD TRIP: AMERICAN ADVENTURE



» Our two-week, 3000-mile American road trip took us through four states – California, Nevada, Utah and Arizona – and seven National Parks.

We picked up our Mustang in downtown San Francisco and after pretending to be Lieutenant Frank Bullitt on the steep streets of Pacific Heights, we headed to Yosemite National Park and its amazingly scenic mountain roads.

Next stop was Death Valley, where all roads appeared to be from clichéd 'road to infinity' postcards. After surviving the near-50°C heat, we passed through Zion and Bryce Canyon, where our convertible allowed us to really appreciate the grandeur of the scenery.

Three more National Parks later, we

and on the other side things get considerably better. Here the road climbs again through fields and there are some fast corners that will forever be associated, in my mind, with the photographer Kenny P. No stranger to this road thanks to countless photoshoots here, he was super-committed on this section and knew each corner's turn-in point to the very millimetre. His venerable V6 Mondeo with intergalactic mileage was unbeatable along this stretch, no matter what you were in.

Through Catworth, between some claustrophobically high hedges, over the A14, up a long, gently curving incline to a junction and then slowly through Old Weston. Now things get really good. Don't miss the right turn just after the sharp left, then enjoy a piece of road that you will certainly recognise from this magazine. Look out for the tricky 90-degree left that comes after a fast stretch and enjoy the S-bends between the hedges on the downhill run between Winwick and Great Gidding.

The trees and hedges return as you head downhill towards Glatton and the bridge over the A1(M), but once the other side of the motorway the scenery changes for the final time. As the road spits you out of Holme and over a level crossing, the horizon widens and you accelerate onto flat, open, fenland roads with just one tight 90-degree left before you reach the T-junction at Ramsey St Mary's.

HOW TO GET THERE

From the south, leave the M1 at junction 13 and go towards Bedford on the A421. After 8.5 miles take the A6 and head towards the town centre, then briefly pick up the signs for Cambridge and the A428 before following the B660 north through the suburbs towards Kimbolton.

The easiest way to reach the northernmost end of the B660 is to take junction 16 off the A1(M) just south of Peterborough. From here take the B1043, which runs south alongside the A1(M), and then turn left after 2.5 miles for the B660.

WHERE TO EAT

The Plough at Bolnhurst gets good reviews, serves an interesting menu based around seasonal produce and is right on the B660. Kimbolton is also an attractive place to stop and The New Sun Inn gets praise for its desserts.

WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR

That swiftly but neatly driven saloon with immaculately clean bodywork containing four white-shirted men.

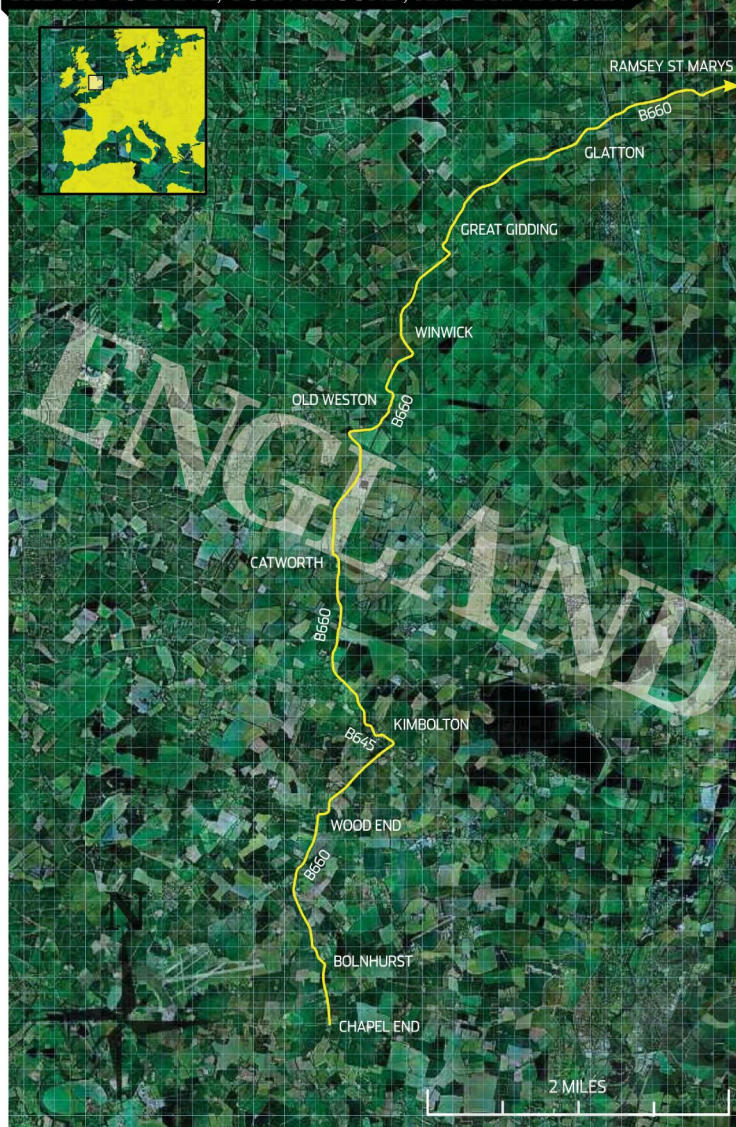
The police use the B660 for training and although they might not be overly concerned with what you're up to, it's probably best not to try to out-brake them for the overtake.

Also expect farm traffic, heed village speed limits and look out for a very deceptive corner before Great Gidding.

Henry Catchpole



THE BIT TO DRIVE, TURN AROUND, AND DRIVE AGAIN



took in a section of the 'Mother Road', Route 66, passing through towns that had turned gas stations into homages to the Route 66 of old, with bric-a-brac, metal soft drink advertising signs and graveyards of old American cars.

We definitely left the best till last: Pacific Highway One, from Santa Barbara to San Francisco. Scenic coastal roads for 250 miles...

The finale couldn't have been better: watching the sun set over the 18th hole at Pebble Beach – home of the annual Concours d'Elegance. This was a road trip I'll never forget, and will hopefully repeat again one day.

Adam Moran

Send your road trip story to eds@evo.co.uk

TRIED & TESTED

ROAD ANGEL GEM £129.99 WWW.ROADANGELGROUP.COM

» The Gem is the latest addition to Road Angel's range of safety camera and accident black spot alert systems, and the company claims it is its most advanced speed management device yet.

It makes a good impression straight out of the box. At just 8.5cm across, it's nicely compact. A small base sticks to your dash (and stays there), then the unit itself attaches to that via a magnet, so fitting and removing it couldn't be quicker or easier.

On the move, the Gem successfully identified every fixed or mobile camera site on several of my well-trodden routes,

suggesting I could be confident in its knowledge in unfamiliar territory.

It was less successful at providing advisory speed limits, getting a couple wrong, but believe it or not there is no 100 per cent accurate database of UK limits. Gem users can help out, though – with just a few button presses you can report a changed speed limit. The unit also boasts a one-touch connection to the emergency services, although thankfully we didn't have the opportunity to put this to the test.

Downsides? The warning beeps are annoyingly squawky, and don't stop until



you pass the camera site, and at £65.99 for a year, subscription prices (the Gem can receive updates on the move) aren't cheap.

Those issues aside, though, if you're looking for a speed camera warning device, the Gem is hard to fault.

Ian Eveleigh

HAVE A PRODUCT FOR US TO REVIEW? CONTACT TRIED&TESTED@EVO.CO.UK



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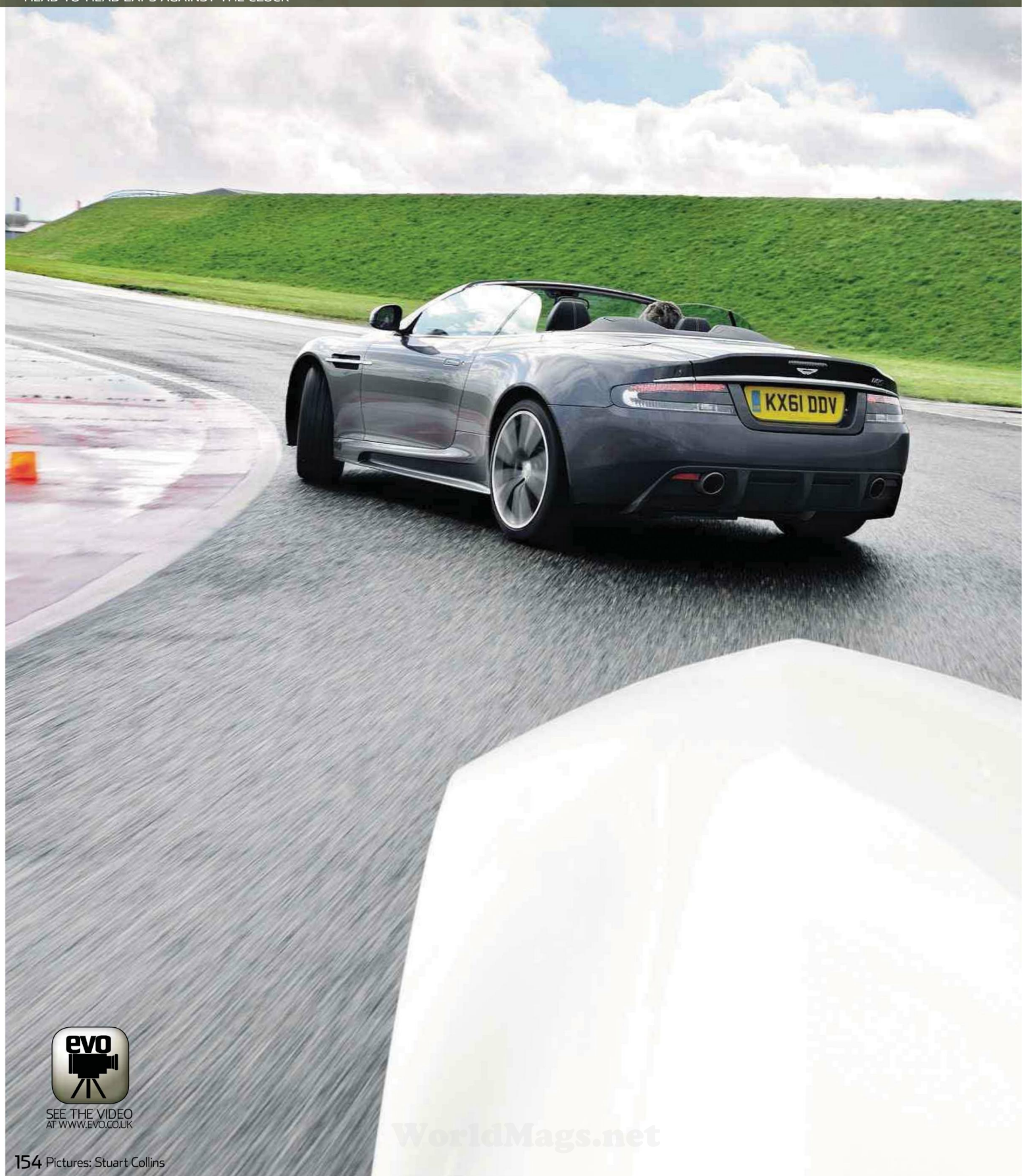


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evoTrack Battle

HEAD-TO-HEAD LAPS AGAINST THE CLOCK



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SPECIFICATIONS

ASTON DBS VOLANTE	MERCEDES SLS ROADSTER
Engine V12, 5935cc	Engine V8, 6208cc
Power 510bhp @ 6500rpm	Power 563bhp @ 6800rpm
Torque 420lb ft @ 5750rpm	Torque 479lb ft @ 4750rpm
Weight (kerb) 1810kg	Weight (kerb) 1735kg
Power-to-weight 286bhp/ton	Power-to-weight 330bhp/ton
0-60mph 4.3sec (claimed)	0-60mph 3.7sec (claimed)
Top speed 191mph (limited)	Top speed 197mph (claimed)
Price £190,812	Price £176,895

ASTON MARTIN DBS VOLANTE v MERCEDES SLS AMG ROADSTER

510bhp Aston takes on 563bhp Merc in the battle of the convertible supercars. Tiff Needell finds out which is faster – and which is the more enjoyable – at a rather damp Bedford

With nearly four hundred thousand pounds' worth of convertible supercar sitting in the pit garage, this was always going to be a pretty special day – although one of the main reasons you buy a convertible is so that you can drive with the top down, and you don't tend to do a lot of that when it's raining...

So conditions weren't ideal and my lap-times would probably struggle to match those of a Golf GTI in the dry. But then the conditions would be the same for both cars and that's what a Track Battle is all about – which is faster on the day.

That said, trying to set a consistent lap-time around the tight and twisty Bedford track with over five hundred horsepower under my right foot was going to be a challenge in itself – with no aerodynamic aids, downforce would be dependent solely on the weight of the car.

On paper, the Aston Martin is at a slight disadvantage, being 53bhp down on power and 75kg heavier, but the wet conditions would surely be a great leveller – it's getting that power to the ground that really matters. And, if a little inspiration helps get you in the mood, there's nothing quite like sliding into the leather-lined cockpit of a DBS.

While the world may have rather ridiculed the Aston's 'Emotion Control Unit' – or key to most of us – it is actually the best compromise in the world of keyless ignitions. The ever-growing number of bulky keys that have nowhere to go, so end up rattling around in a door-bin or cup-holder, drives me mad. So slotting the 'ECU' into the centre of what is also the start button is the perfect compromise – especially as it brings alive the glorious sounds of the 5.9-litre V12 lurking under the bonnet.

Without sufficient time to test whether I would be better off with or without the Adaptive Damping System varying the

stiffness for me, I switched to Track mode to set it in the firmest position and launched myself onto the circuit. I also thought I'd try the DSC stability control in Track mode, but after two corners of stuttering interruption I soon turned it off completely and applied my full attention to the task ahead. My only slight regret was that I wished this DBS had the manual gearbox and not the latest Touchtronic2 six-speed auto. The price is the same and the manual is one of the best.

With carbon-ceramic brakes fitted as standard there was no sign of brake-fade but the slippery conditions meant the ABS was working overtime. The theory used to be that, as soon as you felt ABS operating, you should ease the pressure to come out of the activation zone and so get better braking efficiency. But as systems get ever more efficient, nowadays I tend to just nail it and stay on it.

Trying to get big, heavy cars turned into corners on a wet track is always going to be a challenge and so it proved with the Aston – to make sure I got to the apexes of the slower turns, I had to use those brakes long and hard to scrub off a bit more speed than I really felt I wanted to.

Having made the apex, it was then possible to feed in all that wonderful power, listen to the wailing rise in the revs and balance the loss of traction with delicate throttle control and a fair amount of opposite lock – heaven!

Unfortunately the gearing didn't help: in the medium-speed corners, second seemed too low but third dropped the revs out of the powerband, so the Chicane, Pif-Paf and Esses all saw the V12 well wound-up and producing more power than I sometimes wanted.

It was in the faster corners that the Aston excelled. With a third gear that was just right and sufficient speed to lighten the



Above: motoring ed Duff runs through the Track Battle rules with Tiff one more time: no showboating on the timed laps!



rear end on turn-in, there was noticeably less understeer and a beautifully smooth transition to neutrality at the apex with easily controlled oversteer on the way out.

The Mercedes is a very different beast, the big, grunty, AMG-tuned 6.2-litre V8 pumping out 563bhp and over 10 per cent more torque than the Aston's V12 for good measure. With the lumpy 'keyless' key stuck in my pocket, the whole car trembles with excitement as soon as the start button is pressed.

With a tug of the right-hand, steering-wheel-mounted (as they all should be) paddle, the Speedshift DCT engages the first of its seven gears and I'm ready to party. No track modes on offer here, no halfway-house traction control, so it's all systems off and all down to me.

Immediately the car feels much stiffer – and immediately I know that this is not going to be a good thing in these conditions. Out of the pits, into the Hangar Hairpin and there is a lot more understeer. Crack open the throttle a little and it gets worse; more throttle and whoaaa – too much oversteer! This is going to take some taming.



The familiar 5.9-litre Aston V12 (top) and the SLS's 6.2-litre V8, both naturally aspirated and none the worse for that

While everyone loves torque, this is a clear demonstration that you can have too much of a good thing. While the Aston will gradually introduce more and more power with no sudden twist of torque, enabling you to produce a nicely balanced power-slide (when the shape of the corner permits), the Merc's gearing always keeps you right in the thick of the action and it's the torque that will suddenly break the traction.

Able to stay in third for the medium-speed stuff, I can focus on running the car into the corners as neatly as possible and feeling the front end gripping before I get too greedy with the power. Add it too soon and the front dives wide; leave it too late and be prepared to add opposite lock very quickly! A stronger limited-slip diff than the Aston's would reap dividends in the dry (I sense the SLS would be awesome on a dry track) but more easily lights up the rears in the wet.

It's a wild ride, but the Merc still does just enough to see off the Aston. Helped by the optional £9768's worth of ceramic brakes and (once it was straight!) that extra grunt, the SLS outpaces the DBS by 0.9sec. But it was hard work to get the time.

**'MORE THROTTLE
AND WHOOAA – TOO
MUCH OVERSTEER!'**



LAP ANALYSIS

SECTOR 1

START TO END OF PALMER STRAIGHT

» While the understeer feels worse in the Mercedes, the fact that there is less roll means I can actually get into the Hangar Hairpin at a slightly higher speed – yet I'm more confidently on the power in the Aston and get better acceleration out before the AMG powerhouse roars ahead. Unfortunately too much power too soon gets the Aston out of shape exiting the Club Chicane at just the moment I need to change up to third, and for once I thank the paddleshift. But the Aston is much more confidence-inspiring through Palmer's Curves, with only half a lift required compared with a complete bail-out and a snap of oversteer in the Mercedes, which meant it was only 3mph faster at the end of the straight.



BedfordAutodrome

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PALMER STRAIGHT PEAK SPEED

» DBS: 101.7mph
» SLS: 104.8mph

NEW PIF-PAF CORNER SPEED

» DBS: 54mph
» SLS: 59mph

BANK COMPLEX CORNER SPEED

» DBS: 36mph
» SLS: 34mph

BECKHAM ESSES CORNER SPEED

» DBS: 46mph
» SLS: 46mph

CLUB CHICANE CORNER SPEED

» DBS: 48mph
» SLS: 49mph

HANGAR HAIRPIN CORNER SPEED

» DBS: 25mph
» SLS: 28mph

TOWER CORNER SPEED

» DBS: 67mph
» SLS: 67mph

O'ROUGE CORNER SPEED

» DBS: 63mph
» SLS: 59mph

SECTOR 3

BECKHAM ESSES TO FINISH LINE

» Unsettled by that snap of oversteer just as the braking point for O'Rouge nears, I feel the need to brake more in the SLS to calm things down for a moment. The Aston slides into the apex 4mph faster, but while I'm busy gathering it up and getting it pointing straight, the advantage is quickly lost and the Mercedes powers ahead once again. A final flourish through the slightly faster Tower sees an almost perfect match – and an equally wide grin on my face in both cars.

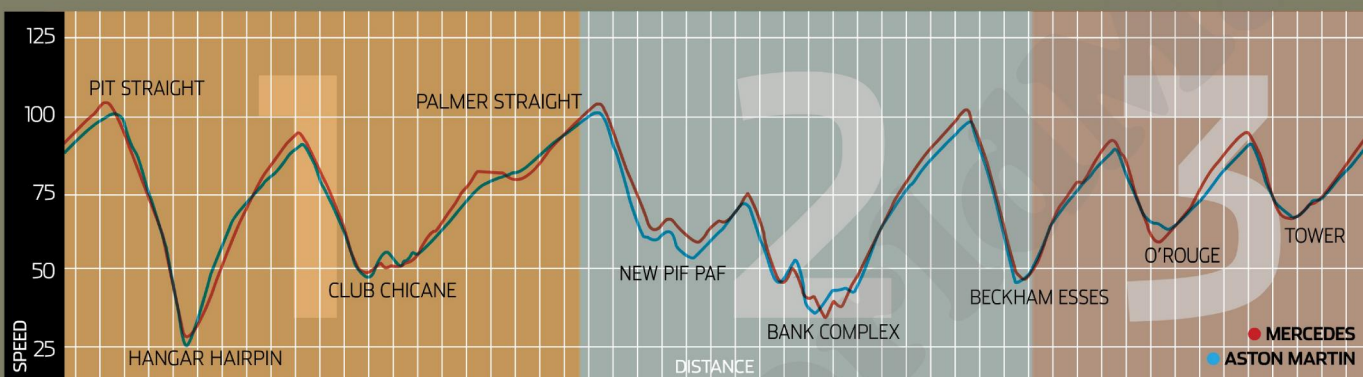


SECTOR 2

PIF-PAF TO BECKHAM ESSES

» The second sector of the West Circuit produces a right old to-and-fro between the two cars. I'm able to push into the New Pif-Paf faster in the Mercedes, but the Aston as good as catches the time back with a better exit and is then much more agile through the right and left of the Bank Complex. Of course, once

the lighter and more powerful SLS is hooked up it shows no mercy. The Beckham Esses are a very slight left-right and for once the cars seem pretty evenly matched, although another snap of oversteer in the Merc loses it a bit more time as we head for the last two corners.



» The SLS (red trace) hits higher peak speeds and is generally quicker through the slower turns, but the Aston comes into its own in the later stages of the lap, particularly through O'Rouge where there's less understeer than in the Mercedes and a nice, smooth transition into easily modulated oversteer. SLS's jagged trace coming out of the Club Chicane shows what a handful it is

THE TIMES

ASTON DBS VOLANTE 1.33.2 (peak speed 101.7mph) **MERCEDES SLS** 1.32.3 (peak speed 104.8mph)

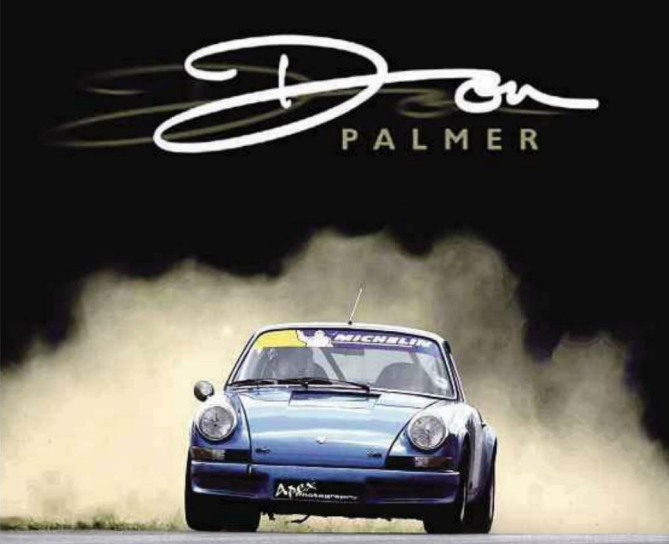
TURN OVER FOR FULL RESULTS TABLE »

evoTrack Times

THE LEADERBOARD

	LAP TIME	PEAK	ISSUE NO.	CONDITIONS
Radical SR8LM (fastest car)	1:13.6	127.8	138	Dry
Caparo T1 (fastest supercar)	1:14.8	130.9	131	Dry
Ferrari 458 Italia	1:19.3	120.0	159	Dry
Gumpert Apollo S	1:19.4	120.4	119	Dry
McLaren MP4-12C (Corsa tyres)	1:19.6	121.2	159	Dry
Caterham Levante V8	1:19.6	118.6	131	Dry
Porsche 997 GT2 RS	1:19.9	122.3	158	Dry
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	1:20.1	113.2	138	Dry
Caterham Superlight R500	1:20.2	115.7	119	Dry
McLaren MP4-12C	1:20.6	120.9	159	Dry
Noble M600	1:20.8	121.8	159	Dry
Porsche 997 GT3 RS 4.0 (fastest coupe)	1:21.0	118.2	160	Dry
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	1:21.3	121.1	134	Dry
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	1:21.5	113.6	119	Dry
KTM X-Bow (300bhp)	1:21.5	112.7	138	Dry
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	1:21.7	117.2	121	Dry
Porsche 997.2 GT3 RS (3.8)	1:21.9	116.8	150	Dry
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	1:22.5	119.1	122	Dry
Brooke Double R	1:22.5	113.2	119	Dry
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	1:22.9	116.7	143	Dry
Porsche Carrera GT	1:23.3	115.2	119	Dry
Porsche 997.2 GT3	1:23.3	114.5	138	Dry
Porsche 997 Turbo S	1:23.5	117.5	146	Dry
Porsche 997 GT2	1:23.5	115.1	119	Dry
Nissan GT-R	1:23.6	113.1	119	Dry
Porsche 997 Turbo	1:24.1	113.5	136	Damp
Lotus 340R (190bhp)	1:24.2	110.0	135	Dry
Caterham Superlight R300	1:24.3	101.5	138	Dry
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	1:24.5	115.1	160	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	1:24.6	115.7	146	Dry
Porsche Boxster Spyder	1:24.7	107.7	167	Dry
Ferrari California	1:25.0	111.8	134	Dry
KTM X-Bow	1:25.0	105.0	123	Dry
BMW E92 M3 Coupe	1:25.1	109.1	162	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black	1:25.2	108.6	131	Dry
Audi R55	1:25.4	108.8	162	Dry
Audi R8 Spyder V8	1:25.5	107.0	167	Dry
Porsche Cayman R	1:25.5	106.8	158	Dry
BMW M5 (F10) (fastest saloon)	1:25.7	112.0	165	Dry
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	1:25.8	110.9	146	Dry
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	1:25.9	107.5	138	Dry
BMW 1-series M Coupe	1:25.9	106.4	158	Dry
Mitsubishi Evo X RS 360	1:26.1	106.6	153	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophy (fastest hot hatch)	1:26.1	105.3	166	Dry
Audi TT RS	1:26.3	107.2	149	Dry
Aston Martin DBS	1:26.4	109.5	143	Dry
Porsche Panamera Turbo	1:26.5	109.2	137	Dry
Jaguar XJ220	1:26.7	111.7	131	Dry
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	1:26.8	104.9	165	Dry
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (fastest 4x4)	1:26.9	107.4	158	Dry
Lotus Evora	1:27.1	104.2	145	Dry
Nissan 370Z	1:27.1	104.0	158	Dry
Honda Civic Type-R Mugen 2.2	1:27.2	102.6	166	Dry
Porsche Panamera S	1:27.3	102.4	165	Dry
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	1:27.7	111.0	162	Dry
Lotus Elise SC	1:27.7	104.6	131	Dry
Vauxhall VXR8 Bathurst S	1:27.8	106.1	131	Dry
BMW E46 M3 CSL	1:27.8	105.4	153	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	1:27.8	103.3		
Audi RS6 Avant (fastest estate)	1:27.9	111.0	121	Dry
Jaguar XFR	1:27.9	108.1	137	Dry
Honda Civic Type-R Mugen 2.0	1:28.0	104.4	138	Dry
Lexus IS-F	1:28.1	106.4	151	Dry
Porsche Boxster S	1:28.1	105.4	120	Dry
Subaru WRX STI	1:28.3	101.6	157	Dry
Jaguar XJ Supersport	1:28.4	106.6	147	Dry
SEAT Leon Cupra R	1:28.7	102.4	162	Dry
Bentley Continental Supersports	1:29.2	105.8	149	Dry
Lotus Elise Club Racer	1:29.2	95.5	162	Dry
Maserati Quattroporte S	1:29.5	105.0	137	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	1:29.9	101.4	156	Dry
Honda NSX	1:30.1	101.3	145	Dry
VW Scirocco 2.0 TSI	1:30.4	98.9	155	Dry
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	1:30.8	101.8	131	Dry
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	1:31.9	97.2	144	Dry
Mercedes SLS Roadster	1:32.3	104.8	172	Wet
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	1:32.4	99.3		
Aston Martin DBS Volante	1:33.2	101.7	172	Wet
Renaultsport Clio T72 Cup	1:33.4	96.1	144	Dry

In the table of lap times above, entries in **bold** are new additions, while **yellow** denotes fastest in class.



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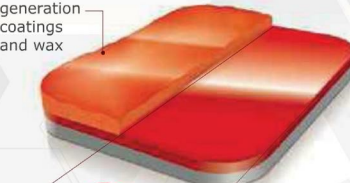
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SUPERMINIS/HOT HATCHES



OUR CHOICE: Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup. After the mild disappointment of the Clio 197, Renaultsport got the Clio back to its very best with the 200 Cup – a cracking small hot hatch more than capable of chasing down supercars on eCoty 2009 for a top five finish.

BEST OF THE REST: The RS Mégane is the Clio's more mature but still thrilling big brother, while Mini's mad JCW still appeals, too. If you're on a tighter budget, the Renault Twingo 133 Cup and Suzuki's second-generation Swift Sport (right) are belters.



Abarth Punto Evo	149 F	£16,852	4/1368	161/5500	184/2250	1155kg	142	7.9	-	132	142	47.1	+ Attractive and fun - Needs the Esseesse power upgrade	★★★★☆
Abarth 500 Esseesse	129 R	£17,207	4/1368	158/5750	170/3000	1035kg	155	7.2	20.4	131	155	43.5	+ A properly fun, old-school hot hatch - Limited numbers being imported	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Mito 1.4 TB	132 D	£15,950	4/1368	135/5250	152/1750	1145kg	120	8.2	-	129	129	50.4	+ So close to being a modern-day AlfaSeed - But not close enough...	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Mito Cloverleaf	149 F	£18,755	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1145kg	149	7.5	-	136	139	47.1	+ Great MultiAir engine, impressive ride - Not as feisty as we hoped	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Giulietta 1.4 MultiAir	144 D	£20,505	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1290kg	134	7.8	-	135	134	48.7	+ Has the equivalent VW Golf covered - An Alfa for your head, not your heart	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf	144 D	£25,510	4/1742	232/5500	251/1900	1320kg	179	6.8	-	150	177	57.2	+ Shows signs of deep talent... - ...but should be more exciting	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 147 2.0 Lusso		'01-'09	4/1970	150/6300	134/3800	1270kg	120	9.3	-	129	-	31.7	+ Fantastic looks, engine and handling - Build quality still lacking	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	053 F	'03-'06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	6.0	15.5	153	-	23.3	+ Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 145 Cloverleaf		'95-'01	4/1970	150/6200	138/4000	1200kg	127	8.0	-	129	-	32.1	+ Fiery engine, individual appeal - Ape-like driving position	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Cygnet	159 D	£30,995	4/1329	97/6000	92/4400	920kg	107	11.8	-	106	116	56.5	+ Necessary - Evil	★★★★☆
Audi A1 1.4 TFSI S Line		£21,270	4/1390	182/6200	184/2000	1190kg	155	6.9	-	141	139	47.9	+ Audi's Mini rival is an accomplished thing - But not a hugely fun one	★★★★☆
Audi A1 quattro	168 F	£41,020	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1300kg	198	5.6	-	152	-	-	+ Extreme AWD hatch, 253bhp - Just 19 for UK, Porsche Cayman price	★★★★☆
Audi S3	106 R	£31,065	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1455kg	183	5.6	13.6	155	198	33.2	+ Very fast, very effective, very...err, quality - A little too clinical	★★★★☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	156 F	£39,990	5/2490	335/5400	332/1600	1575kg	216	4.5	-	155	212	31.0	+ Above, with added five-pot character - Again, see above...	★★★★☆
BMW 118i	161 D	£21,985	4/1598	168/4800	184/1500	1365kg	125	7.3	-	140	137	47.9	+ Better to drive, and greener than the last one - But no better looking	★★★★☆
BMW 123d M Sport	122 R	'07-'11	4/1995	201/4400	295/2000	1420kg	144	6.5	17.4	148	138	54.3	+ Economical and no slouch - Doesn't feel special enough	★★★★☆
BMW 130i M Sport	106 R	'05-'10	6/2996	261/6650	232/2750	1450kg	183	6.1	15.3	155	-	34.0	+ Fantastic engine - Suspension can still get a little bouncy	★★★★☆
BMW 325i Compact	031 D	'01-'05	6/2494	189/6000	181/5500	1480kg	130	7.1	-	147	-	31.7	+ Terrific engine, chassis, price - Looks a bit geeky	★★★★☆
Citroën C1/Peugeot 107/Toyota Aygo	126 F	'07/995-	3/998	68/6000	68/3600	790kg	87	14.2	-	98	103	61.4	+ Full of character and insurance-friendly - Insurance friendly power	★★★★☆
Citroën C2 GT	064 R	'04-'05	4/1587	108/5750	108/4000	1027kg	107	8.7	-	121	-	-	+ Appearing and affordable homologation special - Inert steering	★★★★☆
Citroën Saxo VTR	015 R	'97-'03	4/1587	100/5700	100/3500	920kg	110	9.3	-	116	-	36.7	+ VTS pose, half the insurance group - Cramped pedals	★★★★☆
Citroën Saxo VTS	020 R	'97-'03	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	935kg	130	7.6	22.6	127	-	34.9	+ Chunky, chuckable charger - Can catch out the unwary	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 F	£16,800	4/1598	154/6000	177/1400	1240kg	126	7.2	-	153	155	42.2	+ A proper French hot hatch - Petrolheads might find it too 'designed'	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 Racing	153 D	£23,100	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	167	6.5	-	146	149	-	+ Faster, feistier version of above - It's six grand more than a Clio Cup	★★★★☆
Citroën Xsara VTS		'98-'04	4/1997	167/7000	142/4750	1190kg	143	8.0	-	137	-	33.6	+ Citroën's GTI-6 - Missing one gear and a bit of handling polish	★★★★☆
Fiat Panda 100HP	132 F	'06-'11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	975kg	103	9.5	-	115	154	43.5	+ Most fun per pound on the market - Optional ESP can't be turned off	★★★★☆
Fiat Punto Evo Sporting	141 D	£14,500	4/1368	133/5000	152/1750	1155kg	117	8.5	-	127	129	50.4	+ Great engine, smart styling - Dynamics don't live up to the Evo name	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta SE	084 R	'03-'08	4/1597	94/5500	100/4250	934kg	102	9.5	-	108	-	37.2	+ Big fun in a little package - Could handle even more power	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	123 D	£14,545	4/1596	118/6000	112/4050	1045kg	115	9.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ Genuinely entertaining supermini - Grown up compared to Twingo/Swift	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S Mountune	132 F	£16,000	4/1596	138/6750	125/4250	1080kg	130	7.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ As above, with a fantastically loud exhaust... - ...if you're 12 years old	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	020 R	'00-'02	4/1596	102/6000	107/4000	976kg	106	10.2	-	113	-	38.2	+ Better than you'd ever believe - No-one else will believe it	★★★★☆
Ford Focus 1.6T Zetec S	165 D	£20,695	4/1596	179/5700	199/1900	1333kg	136	7.8	-	138	139	47.1	+ The fastest, keenest Mk3 Focus yet - The Mk1's sparkle is still absent, though	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	'05-'08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	129	-	38.2	+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST185 Mountune	115 R	'08	4/1999	185/6700	147/3500	1137kg	165	6.9	-	129	-	-	+ Fiesta ST gets the power it always needed - OTT exhaust note	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS500	152 F	'10-'11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	5.6	12.7	165	225	-	+ More power and presence than above - Pricey (and all sold!)	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	139 R	'09-'11	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	208	5.9	14.2	163	225	30.5	+ Huge performance, highly capable fwd chassis - It could be the last RS...	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST Mountune	137 R	'08-'11	5/2522	256/5500	295/2500	1392kg	187	5.8	14.3	155	224	-	+ ST takes extra power in its stride - You probably still want an RS	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST	119 R	'05-'10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	6.7	16.8	150	224	30.4	+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	053 R	'02-'03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	169	5.9	14.9	144	-	-	+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty)	★★★★☆
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	157 F	'92-'96	4/1993	227/6250	224/3500	1304kg	176	5.8	-	143	-	24.5	+ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Ultimate trophy for tea leaves	★★★★☆
Ford Puma 1.7	095 F	'97-'02	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1041kg	120	8.6	27.6	122	-	38.2	+ Everything - Nothing. The 1.4 is worth a look too	★★★★☆
Ford Racing Puma	016 F	'00-'01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	132	7.8	23.2	137	-	34.7	+ Exclusivity - Expense. Standard Puma does it so well	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R Mugen	144 F	'09-'11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	195	5.9	-	155	-	-	+ Fantastic on road and track - There'll only be 20, and it's a tad pricey...	★★★★☆
Honda Civic T-R-C 'Ship White	126 D	'09-'10	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	-	146	-	31.0	+ Limited-slip diff a welcome addition - It's not available on standard car...	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R	102 R	'07-'11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.8	17.5	146	215	31.0	+ Looks great, VTEC, more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R	075 R	'01-'05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	166	6.8	16.9	146	-	31.7	+ Potent and great value - Looks divide opinion, dull steering	★★★★☆
Lancia Delta Integrale	011 F	'88-'93	4/1995	210/5750	220/3500	1350kg	158	5.7	-	137	-	23.9	+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only	★★★★☆
Mazda 2 1.5 Sport	132 F	£12,995	4/1498	102/6000	101/4000	1030kg	107	10.4	-	117	135	48.7	+ Fun and funky - Feels tinny after a Mini	★★★★☆
Mazda 3 MPS	137 R	£23,395	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1385kg	188	6.3	14.5	155	224	29.4	+ Quick, eager and very good value - The steering's still stiff	★★★★☆
Mazda 3 MPS Aero Kit (Mk1)	106 R	'07-'09	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1410kg	184	6.1	14.3	155	-	29.1	+ Speed, grip, stability - Slightly strange steering, dull styling	★★★★☆
MG ZS 180	035 D	'01-'05	6/2497	175/6500	177/4000	1235kg	144	7.3	-	139	-	29.7	+ Well-sorted chassis, characterful engine - Image looks like a 45	★★★★☆
Mini One		£13,460	4/1598	97/6000	113/3000	1070kg	92	10.5	-	116	127	52.3	+ Perfect power-to-grip ratio - HUGE speed, slow car	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper	167 R	£14,900	4/1598	120/6500	118/4250	1075kg	113	9.1	-	126	127	52.3	+ Still desirable - Steering has lost a little feel	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S	149 F	£18,175	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1140kg	161	7.0	-	142	136	48.7	+ New engine, Mini quality - Lacks old car's direct front end	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper SD	158 D	£18,870	4/1995	141/4000	225/1750	1150kg	125	8.0	-	134	114	65.7	+ A quick diesel Mini with impressive mpg - But no Cooper S alternative	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works	154 R	£22,450	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1140kg	185	6.5	-	148	165	39.8	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works Coupe	164 R	£24,850	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1165kg	181	6.3	-	149	165	39.8	+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But with a questionable 'helmet' roof...	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S Works (Mk2)	111 F	'07-'08	4/1598	189/6000	199/1750	1130kg	170	7.6	18.0	145	-	-	+ Cracking hot Mini, until the JCW - Expensive with option packs included	★★★★☆



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KEY: » New entries this month. Issue no: our most recent major test of the car (R = Road test or group test figures, D = Driven, F = Feature article). You can order back issues where still available – call 0844 844 0039. Entries in italics are no longer on sale. Prices are on-the-road including VAT and delivery charges. Weight is the car's kerb weight as quoted by the manufacturer. Bhp/ton is the power-to-weight ratio based on manufacturer's kerb weight. 0-60 and 0-100 figures in bold are independently recorded, all other performance figures are manufacturers' claims. CO2 is the official EC figure and EC mpg is the official 'Combined' figure or equivalent. * = grey import. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of entries, some errors may have crept in. Please send comments/corrections to stephend@evo.co.uk

STAR RATINGS: ★ Thrill-free zone ★★ Tepid ★★★ Interesting ★★★★ Seriously good ★★★★★ A truly great car

	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Mini Cooper S Works GP	144 F	'05	4/1598	215/7100	184/4600	1090kg	200	6.5	-	149	-	32.8	+ Storming engine, agility - Tacky styling 'enhancements'	★★★★★
Mini Cooper S (Mk1)	077 R	'02-'06	4/1598	168/6000	155/4000	1140kg	143	7.8	19.9	135	-	33.6	+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Colt Rallart	132 F	£14,229	4/1468	147/6000	155/3500	1060kg	141	7.4	-	131	161	40.9	+ Price, handling, performance - Its looks are a little odd	★★★★★
Nissan Sunny GTi-R		'92-'93	4/1998	220/6400	197/4800	1269kg	176	6.1	-	134	-	25.1	+ Nissan's Escort Cossie - Make sure it's a good one	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)		'92-'98	4/1587	103/6200	97/3500	865kg	121	8.8	-	121	-	34.0	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 F	'94-'96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	123	9.3	-	118	-	35.6	+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs caning to extract full potential	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 GTi 16v	034 R	'97-'04	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	950kg	128	7.4	22.2	127	-	34.9	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age	★★★★★
Peugeot 205 GTi 1.9	095 F	'88-'91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	910kg	145	7.9	-	124	-	36.7	+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 GTi-6	020 R	'93-'01	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1215kg	139	7.2	20.1	140	-	30.1	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 F	'98-'99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1199kg	141	6.9	19.2	137	-	30.1	+ Essentially a GTi-6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours	★★★★★
Peugeot 309 GTi		'89-'92	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	985kg	134	8.3	-	124	-	28.2	+ 205 GTi in drag, cheap - Who wants a cheap drag queen?	★★★★★
Renaultsport Twingo 133 Cup	132 R	£13,595	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1049kg	127	8.7	-	125	155	42.2	+ Renaultsport experience for pocket money - Could handle extra 30bhp	★★★★★
Renault 5GT Turbo	125 F	'87-'91	4/1397	120/5750	122/3750	831kg	146	7.8	-	120	-	28.4	+ Clo Williams' grand-daddy - Most have been thrashed	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	154 R	£17,120	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	6.6	16.7	141	190	34.5	+ The hot Clio is back to its best - Why the long face?	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 197 Cup	115 R	'07-'09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	161	6.9	-	134	-	33.6	+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 182	066 R	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1110kg	165	6.6	17.5	139	-	34.9	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 182 Cup	074 D	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.5	-	139	-	34.9	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio Trophy	095 F	'05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.6	17.3	140	-	34.9	+ Most fun you can have on three wheels - Just 500 were built	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup	048 R	'02-'04	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	171	6.5	17.7	138	-	-	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio V6 255	057 R	'03-'05	6/2946	255/7150	221/4650	1400kg	182	5.8	-	153	-	23.0	+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 16	029 F	'99-'02	6/2946	230/6000	221/3750	1355kg	175	5.8	17.0	145	-	23.0	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky	★★★★★
Renault Clio Williams	095 F	'93-'96	4/1998	148/6100	126/5400	981kg	153	7.6	20.8	121	-	26.0	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile like an Integrale	★★★★★
Renault Mégane GTi TCe 180	154 D	£21,690	4/1998	178/5500	222/2250	1320kg	137	7.7	-	139	178	36.7	+ Rides & steers well - Not much cheaper than car below, lacks its sparkle	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	170 D	£24,825	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.0	-	158	190	34.4	+ More power than before, chassis still superb - Not a lot	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophy	170 R	£27,820	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.0	-	158	190	34.4	+ Hot Mégane gets more power and fwd Ring record - A pricey upgrade	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	139 R	'09-'12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	6.1	14.6	156	190	34.4	+ Fantastic chassis... - partially obscured by new-found maturity	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane R26R	157 F	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	5.8	15.1	147	-	-	+ One of the true hot hatch heroes - Two seats, plastic rear windows	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 230 R26	102 R	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	6.2	16.0	147	-	-	+ Best hot Mégane... until the R26R - F1 Team stickers in dubious taste	★★★★★
Risport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 R	'07-'09	4/1998	173/5750	265/2000	1470kg	119	8.3	23.5	137	-	43.5	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 225 Cup	087 F	'05-'09	4/1998	222/5500	221/3000	1345kg	167	6.5	-	147	-	32.1	+ Good value and plentiful - You gotta like big backslides	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane Trophy	087 F	'05	4/1998	222/5500	221/3000	1355kg	166	6.7	17.3	147	-	32.1	+ Mega grip and traction - Steering needs a touch more feel	★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza FR DSG	167 R	£15,875	4/1390	148/5800	162/1250	1254kg	120	7.5	-	132	139	47.9	+ Strong engine, great value - You're forced to have the DSG automatic 'box	★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza FR 2.0 TDI	144 F	£16,340	4/1968	141/4200	236/1750	1245kg	115	8.2	-	131	123	60.1	+ Even more fun and frugality, manual 'box option - Almost as pricey as the Cupra	★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	139 R	£17,905	4/1998	178/6200	184/2000	1172kg	154	6.9	-	140	148	44.1	+ Funky (especially in Boccagnea trim), economical - The FR's a better drive	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra	104 F	'04-'08	4/1781	178/5500	181/2000	1248kg	145	7.1	-	143	-	35.3	+ Well built, punchy engine - The 'warm' FR is a better bet	★★★★★
SEAT Leon FR+	163 D	£21,940	4/1984	208/5300	206/1700	1334kg	158	7.2	-	145	170	38.7	+ As quick as a Golf GTi 5dr but E4K cheaper - Misses the VW's completeness	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R	139 R	£25,935	4/1984	261/6000	258/2000	1375kg	193	6.1	14.0	155	190	34.9	+ Bold car, binding engine - Lacks the character of its rival mega-hatches	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 F	'07-'11	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1575kg	175	6.3	-	153	190	34.0	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have adjustability of old Cupra R	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra 20v T	020 R	'00-'06	4/1781	178/5500	173/5000	1322kg	137	7.7	-	142	-	33.2	+ Terrific value - Lacks sparkle of very best hatches	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R 225	067 R	'03-'06	4/1781	222/5900	206/2200	1376kg	164	6.9	-	150	-	32.1	+ Cross-country pace, practicality, value - Not as thrilling as some	★★★★★
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	146 D	£16,915	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148	7.3	-	139	148	45.6	+ Well priced, well made, with great engine and DSG 'box - Dull steering	★★★★★
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	077 F	'04-'07	4/1896	130/4000	229/1900	1315kg	100	9.6	-	127	-	55.4	+ Fascinatingly fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 F	£20,330	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1395kg	143	7.3	-	149	175	37.7	+ Drives like a GTi but costs much less - Green brake callipers?	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk1)	032 D	'01-'05	4/1781	178/5500	173/1950	1354kg	135	7.9	-	146	-	35.3	+ Remarkably fun and capable - Cabin quality	★★★★★
Smart Fortwo Brabus	110 D	£15,000	3/999	97/5500	104/3500	780kg	126	9.9	-	96	119	54.3	+ Telling people you drive a Brabus - Then realising it's not a 720bhp S-class	★★★★★
Subaru WRX STi	151 D	£32,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	155	243	26.9	+ Spec C suspension makes a better drive - No blue paint or gold wheels	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STi CS400	146 R	£49,995	4/2457	395/5750	400/3950	1505kg	267	4.6	10.7	155	-	-	+ Cosworth kudos. Fastest hatch we've tested - Pricey, lifeless steering	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX	125 D	'08-'10	4/2457	251/5400	288/3000	1395kg	180	5.5	-	130	270	-	+ An improvement over the basic WRX - Still not the WRX we wanted	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STi 330S	124 F	'08-'10	4/2457	325/5400	347/3400	1505kg	219	4.4	-	155	-	-	+ A bit quicker than the STi... - but not better	★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport (mk2)	167 R	£13,499	4/1585	134/6900	118/4400	1045kg	130	8.7	-	121	147	44.1	+ The Swift's still a great pocket rocket - But it's lost a little adjustability	★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport	132 R	'05-'11	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1030kg	121	8.9	-	124	165	39.8	+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback	★★★★★
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 R	£18,900	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165	6.8	-	140	172	38.7	+ Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared with rivals	★★★★★
Vauxhall Corsa VXR Nürburgring	164 R	£22,295	4/1598	202/5750	206/2250	1166kg	176	6.5	-	143	178	-	+ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But it's over £3K more expensive	★★★★★
Vauxhall Astra GTC 1.6i SRi	164 D	£20,215	4/1598	178/5500	169/2200	1393kg	130	7.8	-	137	168	39.2	+ Three-door Scirocco rival looks good, drives well - Pre-VXR petrol engines lack zing	★★★★★
Vauxhall Astra VXR	102 R	'06-'11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	6.7	16.7	152	221	30.7	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision	★★★★★
Vauxhall Astra VXR 888	127 D	'08-'11	4/1998	295/4650	317/4250	1393kg	215	5.1	-	160	221	-	+ Crazy power, chassis copes admirably - Lacks exploitability of Mégane R26	★★★★★
VW Lupo GTi 6-sp	036 D	'00-'05	4/1598	125/6500	112/3000	978kg	128	8.3	-	127	-	38.2	+ Looks, performance, snappy gearshift - Lacks fizz of 105 GTi	★★★★★
VW Polo GTi	154 R	£24,935	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1184kg	153	6.8	-	142	139	47.9	+ Modern-day mk1 Golf GTi gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland	★★★★★
VW Golf GTD (Mk6)	133 D	£24,660	4/1968	168/4200	258/1750	1329kg	128	8.1	-	138	134	55.4	+ Punchy, performance and good economy - Not as much fun as the GTi	★★★★★
VW Golf GTi (Mk6)	139 R	£25,320	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1318kg	160	6.4	16.5	149	170	38.7	+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more	★★★★★
VW Golf GTi Edition 35	168 F	£27,560	4/1984	252/5500	221/2200	1318kg	179	6.5	-	154	189	34.9	+ The pick of the Golf hot hatch range - Nearly £28K before a single option...	★★★★★
VW Golf R (Mk6)	140 D	£31,435	4/1984	266/6000	258/2500	1521kg	178	5.5	-	155	199	33.2	+ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price, ACC only optional	★★★★★
VW Golf GTi (Mk5)	102 R	'05-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150	6.7	17.9	145	-	-	+ Character and ability, the original GTi is back - Lacking freerover?	★★★★★
VW Golf R32 (Mk5)	087 F	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1510kg	165	5.8	15.2	155	-	26.4	+ Tractor's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTi	★★★★★
VW Golf R32 (Mk4)	053 F	'02-'04	6/3189	237/6250	236/2800	1477kg	163	6.4	16.3	154	-	24.6	+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome	★★★★★
VW Golf GTi 16v (Mk2)		'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	124/4600	1111kg	127	8.0	-	124	-	28.8	+ Arguably the best all-round Golf GTi ever - We'd be splitting hairs	★★★★★
VW Golf GTi (Mk1)	095 F	'82-'84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	840kg	135	8.1	-	112	-	36.0	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested one	★★★★★
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122 R	£22,125	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	6.6	16.9	149	203	32.5	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto	★★★★★

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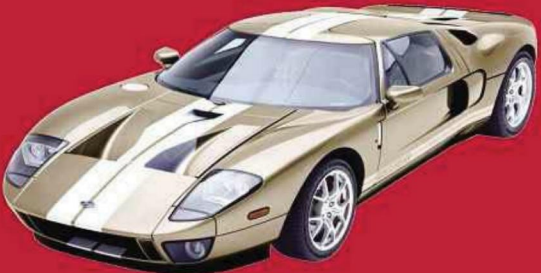
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BMW M3 (E90), ISSUE 123

SALOONS/ESTATES/4X4s



OUR CHOICE: BMW M5. The turbocharging of BMW's M-cars had its sceptics, but the new M5's 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 feels a perfect fit. It's brutally fast, and there are clever (and useable) adjustable driving modes. It looks cool, too. The best big saloon just got even better.

BEST OF THE REST: Mercedes' AMG department is on a roll right now: the 6.2-litre C63 is superb as either saloon or estate, likewise the newly turbo'd E63 (right), which is only narrowly shaded by the M5. Lexus's tail-happy IS-F remains a wonderfully alternative choice too.



Alfa Romeo 156 GTA	045 F	'02-'06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1410kg	180	6.3	-	155	-	23.3	+ Noise, pace and individuality - Front-drive chassis can't keep up	★★★★☆
Alpina D3		£31,650	4/1995	210/4000	332/2000	1495kg	143	6.9	-	152	-	52.3	+ Excellent chassis, turbodiesel oomph - Rather narrow powerband	★★★★☆
Alpina B5 Bturbio	149 D	£75,045	8/4395	500/5500	516/3000	2040kg	265	4.7	-	191	-	-	+ Big performance and top-line luxury - Driver not really involved	★★★★☆
Alpina B5 S	118 D	'07-'10	8/4398	523/5500	535/4750	1720kg	309	4.5	-	197	-	23.0	+ Quicker and more exclusive than the E60 M5 - Suspension has its limits	★★★★☆
Alpina B7	134 D	£94,845	8/4395	507/5500	516/3000	2040kg	252	4.5	-	174	-	-	+ Massive performance and top-line luxury - Feels its weight when hustled	★★★★☆
Alpina B7	085 R	'05-'08	8/4398	500/5500	516/4250	1950kg	261	4.8	-	186	-	-	+ Alpina makes a mod, bad 7-series - Over-cautious traction control	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Rapide	141 F	£149,995	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.2	-	188	355	-	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More a 2+2 than a proper four-seater	★★★★☆
Audi A4 2.0 TFSI quattro		£29,170	4/1984	208/4300	258/1500	1535kg	138	6.4	-	153	159	41.5	+ A good match for its German foes - No longer any naturally aspirated options	★★★★☆
Audi A4 3.0 quattro	032 R	'01-'04	6/2976	220/6300	221/3200	1505kg	146	6.7	-	151	-	26.9	+ V6 adds class - Jag X-type shows how good 4wd can be	★★★★☆
Audi S4 (Mk3)	166 D	£38,665	6/2995	328/5500	324/2900	1685kg	198	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Great powertrain, secure chassis - The new RS4 isn't far off now...	★★★★☆
Audi S4 (Mk2)	073 D	'05-'08	8/4163	339/7000	302/3500	1700kg	206	5.4	-	155	-	-	+ Effortless V8, agile handling - Lacks ultimate finesse of class leaders	★★★★☆
Audi RS4	088 F	'06-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.5	10.9	155	-	-	+ A leap on for fast Audis, superb engine - Busy under braking	★★★★☆
Audi RS4 Avant	105 F	'07-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1700kg	246	4.6	-	155	-	20.6	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! - Everyone thinking you're married with kids	★★★★☆
Audi RS4	024 R	'00-'02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.8	12.1	170	-	17.0	+ Effortless pace - Lacks finesse. Bends wheel rims	★★★★☆
Audi RS2	101 F	'94-'95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	4.8	13.1	162	-	18.0	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one	★★★★☆
Audi S6	091 D	'06-'11	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.2	-	155	299	22.4	+ Even faster, and discreet with it - Very muted V10	★★★★☆
Audi S6	124 D	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	1985kg	293	4.5	-	155	331	20.3	+ Looks and drives better than estate version - M5 still looks tempting	★★★★☆
Audi RS6 Avant	116 F	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	2025kg	287	4.3	9.7	155	333	20.2	+ The world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything	★★★★☆
Audi RS6 Avant	052 R	'02-'04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1885kg	242	4.8	11.6	155	-	19.3	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering	★★★★☆
Audi S7	171 D	£61,695	8/3993	414/5000	406/4100	1945kg	216	4.6	-	155	225	-	+ Looks and drives better than S6 It's based on - Costs £8000 more	★★★★☆
Audi S8	164 D	£77,900	8/3993	513/5800	479/1700	1975kg	264	4.1	-	155	237	27.7	+ Quicker and much more economical than before - But still underwhelming to drive	★★★★☆
Audi S8	088 D	'06-'10	10/5204	444/7000	398/3500	1940kg	232	5.1	-	155	-	21.4	+ V10 engine, ceramic brakes, fantastic gearbox - Light steering	★★★★☆
Audi Q7 V12 TDI	124 D	£100,370	12/5934	493/5750	731/1750	2635kg	190	5.1	12.2	155	298	25.0	+ Undeniably quick, relatively economical - A tad ostentatious	★★★★☆
Bentley Flying Spur	080 D	£133,200	12/5998	552/6100	479/1600	2475kg	226	4.9	-	195	396	16.6	+ Performance, wonderful interior - Have you seen petrol prices?	★★★★☆
Bentley Flying Spur Speed	141 F	£150,900	12/5998	600/6000	553/1750	2440kg	250	4.6	-	200	396	16.6	+ 600bhp, surprisingly fun handling - Could look a bit more like it goes	★★★★☆
Bentley Mulsanne	145 D	£220,000	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2585kg	198	5.1	-	184	393	16.7	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too	★★★★☆
Bentley Amaze R	048 F	'02-'08	8/6750	400/4000	616/3250	2585kg	157	6.9	17.1	155	-	13.7	+ Twin-turbo thrust, limo-like ride - It's a bit heavy	★★★★☆
Bentley Amaze T	096 D	'06-'08	8/6751	500/4200	737/3200	2585kg	196	5.2	-	179	-	14.5	+ Still able to impress - Something of an anachronism	★★★★☆
BMW 320d	168 F	£28,080	4/1995	181/4000	280/1750	1495kg	123	7.4	-	146	120	61.4	+ Fleet-friendly new Three is economical yet entertaining - It's a tad noisy	★★★★☆
BMW 328i	165 D	£29,060	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1430kg	172	5.8	-	155	149	44.8	+ New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (E90)	123 R	'08-'11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	262	4.9	10.7	165	290	22.8	+ Every bit as good as the M3 coupe - No carbon roof	★★★★☆
BMW 335i M Sport	134 F	'05-'11	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1535kg	200	5.6	-	155	196	31.0	+ Stunning drivetrain, controlled chassis - Looks a bit steady	★★★★☆
BMW 330i Sport	028 R	'99-'05	6/2979	231/5900	221/3500	1510kg	153	5.9	17.0	155	-	30.0	+ Clean, classy and confident - Too smooth for its own good?	★★★★☆
BMW 528i	164 D	£38,610	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1710kg	144	6.2	-	155	152	41.5	+ Four-pot 528i is downsizing near its best - You'll miss the straight-six sound effects	★★★★☆
BMW 535i SE	141 D	£38,940	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1685kg	182	6.1	-	155	185	34.9	+ New 5-series impresses... But only with all the chassis options ticked	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (F10M)	165 R	£73,040	8/4395	552/5750	501/5000	1870kg	300	4.3	-	190	232	28.5	+ Twin-turbocharging suits all-new M5 well - Can feel heavy at times	★★★★☆
BMW M5 Touring (E60)	105 F	'07-'10	10/4999	500/7750	383/6100	1780kg	285	4.8	-	155	-	19.3	+ Brilliant at ten tenths - Feels slightly clumsy when pottering	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (E60)	129 F	'04-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1755kg	289	4.7	10.4	155	-	19.6	+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (E39)	110 F	'99-'03	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	223	4.9	11.5	155	-	-	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nit-picking	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (E34)	110 F	'92-'96	6/3795	340/6900	295/4750	1653kg	209	5.9	13.6	155	-	-	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (E28)	110 F	'86-'88	6/3453	286/6500	250/4500	1431kg	203	6.2	-	151	-	-	+ The original storming saloon - Two handfuls in the wet	★★★★☆
BMW X5 xDrive 40d SE		£47,440	6/2993	302/4400	442/1500	2110kg	145	6.6	-	147	198	37.7	+ Handling, comfort, refinement - Looks like a big X3	★★★★☆
BMW X6 xDrive 50i	118 D	£57,880	8/4395	408/5500	442/1750	2190kg	186	5.4	-	155	292	22.6	+ Stunningly good to drive - Will you want to be seen arriving?	★★★★☆
BMW X6M	134 D	£82,190	8/4395	547/6000	502/1500	2305kg	241	4.7	-	171	325	20.3	+ Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor	★★★★☆
BMW 750i		£70,640	8/4395	401/5500	442/1750	2020kg	209	5.2	-	155	266	24.8	+ The ultimate drivers' limo - The back's a nicer place to be than the front	★★★★☆
Brabus Bullit	119 F	£330,000	12/6233	720/5100	811/2100	1850kg	395	3.8	-	217	-	-	+ Seven hundred and twenty bhp - Three hundred thousand pounds	★★★★☆
Cadillac CTS-V	148 F	£72,381	8/6162	556/6100	551/3900	1928kg	293	3.9	-	191	365	18.1	+ It'll stand out among M-cars and AMGs - But the novelty might wear off	★★★★☆
Chrysler 300C SRT8	096 D	'06-'11	8/6059	425/6000	420/4800	1965kg	220	4.9	-	168	337	20.2	+ Looks, supple ride, composed chassis - Too much understeer, slow, 'box	★★★★☆
Chrysler 300C S7 Herri	088 D	'05-'08	8/5654	340/5000	387/4000	1910kg	180	6.2	15.1	155	-	23.3	+ Gangster chic - Ginsters suspension	★★★★☆
Ford Mondeo 2.0T Titanium		£23,045	4/1999	200/6000	221/1750	1581kg	128	7.9	-	144	184	35.8	+ Terrific chassis, sweet engine - People will still want an Audi	★★★★☆
Ford Mondeo ST220	043 D	'02-'07	6/2967	223/6150	204/4900	1550kg	146	6.8	-	151	-	27.7	+ Muscular engine, fine chassis - Hotted-up reproible image	★★★★☆
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth 4x4		'90-'93	4/1993	220/6250	214/3500	1320kg	159	6.6	-	144	-	24.4	+ Fast and furious - Try finding a straight one	★★★★☆
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth		'86-'90	4/1993	204/6000	204/4500	1220kg	169	6.2	-	143	-	-	+ Roadgoing Group A racer - Don't shout about the power output!	★★★★☆
Holden HSV GTS S'charger	041 D	'02	8/5665	502/6050	457/5100	1799kg	283	4.5	-	180	-	-	+ Massive linear power, great chassis - Slow 'shift, cheap interior	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R*	108 D	'07-'10	4/1998	222/8000	158/6100	1252kg	180	5.9	-	150	-	-	+ Screaming engine, razor-sharp chassis - Specialist import only	★★★★☆
Honda Accord Type-R	012 R	'99-'03	4/2157	209/7200	158/6700	1306kg	163	6.1	17.4	142	-	29.4	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Lack of image	★★★★☆
Infiniti M37S	150 D	£40,625	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1765kg	182	6.2	-	155	235	27.7	+ Stands out from the crowd - Not as involving as some rivals	★★★★☆
Jaguar XF 3.0D S	145 D	£41,950	6/2993	271/4000	443/2000	1820kg	161	5.9	-	155	169	44.8	+ Best XF after the R - But we'd still have the R...	★★★★☆

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Tuesday 21 August	Snetterton 300	Taster Session	£25
Tuesday 28 August	Brands Hatch Indy Circuit	Evening	£99
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+M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits

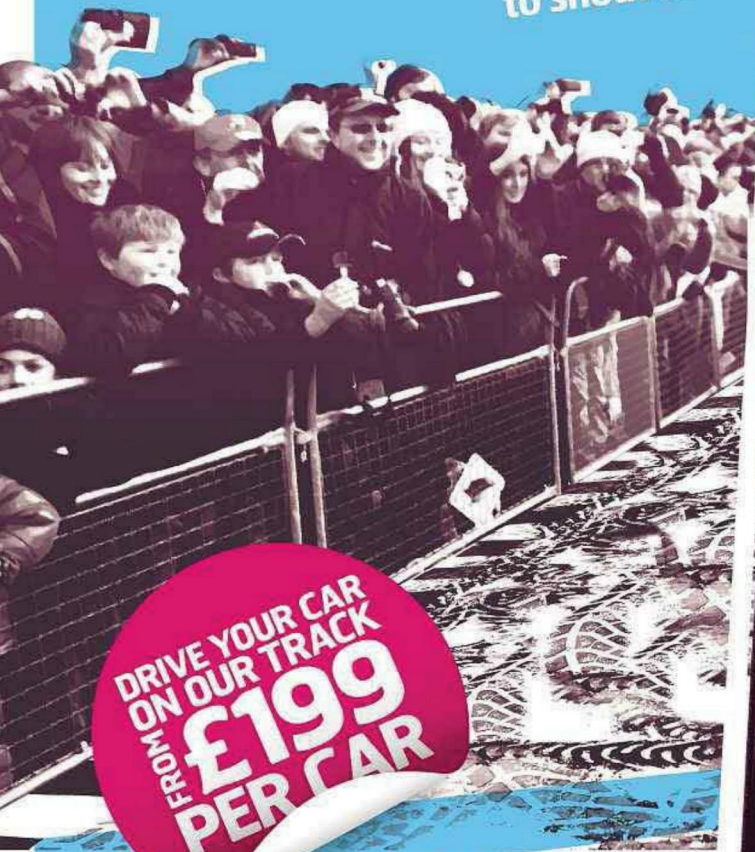
MERCEDES-BENZ E55 AMG, ISSUE 052

evoKnowledge

	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Jaguar XF 5.0		£49,200	8/5000	380/6500	390/3500	1780kg	231	5.5	-	155	264	25.4	+ Fifteen grand cheaper than the XFR... - ...which is still the one we'd have	★★★★☆
Jaguar XFR	165 R	£65,350	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1891kg	270	4.8	10.2	155	292	22.5	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Only's sound as special as it is	★★★★★
Jaguar XF SV8	116 F	£88,099	8/4196	410/6250	413/3500	1842kg	226	5.1	-	155	-	22.4	+ Convincing driving experience - Overshadowed by XFR	★★★★★
Jaguar S-type R	048 R	£102,017	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1800kg	226	5.3	-	155	-	22.5	+ Fine dynamics belie old world looks - Auto-only, and no lsd	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 diesel	148 D	£55,515	6/2993	271/4000	442/2000	1796kg	153	6.0	-	155	184	40.1	+ A great Jaguar - But not as great as the Supersport...	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ Supersport	163 F	£91,050	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1892kg	270	4.9	-	155	289	23.4	+ Superb handling, monster performance - Opinion-dividing looks	★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	054 R	£103,009	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1665kg	244	5.0	-	155	-	23.0	+ Genuine 7-series rival - 2007 facelift didn't help middle-aged image	★★★★★
Jaguar XJR 4.0	018 R	£100,003	8/3996	370/6150	387/3000	1775kg	211	5.6	13.5	155	-	21.9	+ Matchless grace, extraordinary pace - Not much space	★★★★★
Lamborghini LM002	016 F	£86,889	12/5167	450/6800	369/5200	2700kg	169	-	-	130	-	-	+ Craziest 4x4 ever, Countach V12 - Craziest 4x4 ever...	★★★★★
Lexus IS-F	151 R	£58,350	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1714kg	247	4.7	10.9	173	270	24.4	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a (second hand) four-door too	★★★★★
Lotus Carlton	035 F	£91,903	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	4.8	10.6	176	-	17.0	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive a work-out	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 R	£87,400	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1930kg	216	5.1	12.1	174	365	18.0	+ Finally, a QP with more bhp - New grille a bit Hannibal Lecter	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 F	£94,350	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1930kg	221	5.1	-	177	365	18.0	+ The most stylish supersaloon - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte	085 F	£104,008	8/4244	394/7000	333/4500	1930kg	207	5.1	-	171	-	17.9	+ Redefines big-car dynamics - Don't use auto mode	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	113 D	£107,008	8/4244	396/7000	339/4250	1930kg	208	5.5	-	167	-	-	+ Best Quattroporte chassis so far - More power wouldn't go amiss	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5 16		£89,92	4/2498	197/6750	177/5500	1360kg	147	7.2	-	142	-	24.4	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	151 R	£55,545	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1730kg	264	4.4	9.7	160	280	23.5	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - M3's just a little better...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz DP250	148 D	£10,71	8/6208	513/6800	479/5000	1730kg	301	4.1	-	187	-	-	+ C63 AMG goes feral - Just try finding one: Only 20 were made	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG	088 R	£104,008	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	155	-	23.7	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	165 R	£74,895	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1840kg	286	4.2	-	155	295	28.8	+ New turbo engine doesn't dilute E63 experience - Pricey options	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	096 D	£106,009	8/6208	507/6800	464/5200	1840kg	280	4.5	-	155	-	19.8	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 R	£103,005	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	4.8	10.2	155	-	21.9	+ M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG		£98,002	8/5439	354/5500	390/3000	1642kg	219	5.5	-	155	-	23.0	+ Dragster disguised as a limo - Tyre bells	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	148 D	£112,890	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2115kg	257	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	+ Massive torque, massively reduced emissions - Massive car	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S65 AMG	098 F	£164,230	12/5980	604/4750	737/2000	2265kg	272	4.4	-	155	354	19.8	+ Cod's own supersaloon - Unholy pace and thirst	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS53 AMG	154 D	£81,145	8/5461	549/5750	590/2000	1870kg	270	4.3	-	155	231	28.5	+ All-new fast CLS boasts more power, less weight, more mpg - Pricey options	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS53 AMG	099 F	£106,111	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1905kg	270	4.5	-	155	345	19.5	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	167 D	£82,995	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	234	4.7	-	155	276	23.9	+ Great engine and decent dynamics - E85K buys a Boxster and an ML350...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	104 F	£107,100	8/6208	503/6800	464/5200	2310kg	221	4.6	11.0	155	-	17.1	+ Goes like an SUV has no right to - Gordon Murray will hate you	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz G55 AMG	092 F	£117,580	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	2550kg	190	5.2	-	130	378	17.8	+ Thuggishness, anti-style statement - It's a bit silly	★★★★★
MG ZS 180	071 D	£101,005	6/2497	175/6500	177/4000	1235kg	144	7.3	-	139	-	29.7	+ Sweet V6 engine, pace, tidy handling - Image	★★★★★
MG ZT 260 V8	068 F	£103,005	8/4601	256/5000	302/4000	1680kg	155	6.5	16.3	155	-	21.5	+ Lovely woolly V8, well-sorted rear-drive chassis - Thirst	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 F	£31,349	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	5.2	13.9	155	256	26.2	+ Evo gets twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as it used to be	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300	122 D	£38,559	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	230	4.1	-	155	328	19.9	+ Ridiculously rapid new Evo - A five-speed gearbox?	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300		£108,12	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1560kg	189	4.7	-	155	246	27.4	+ The Evo grows up - Perhaps just a little too sensible?	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 F	£108,12	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207	4.4	-	155	256	-	+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-340	138 F	£109,100	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	155	328	-	+ The best Evo X so far... - About X grand too much when new	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 F	£105,007	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	4.3	10.9	157	-	-	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	103 F	£105,007	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 F	£103,004	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	£103,005	4/1997	303/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 F	£102,003	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	205	5.0	13.0	140	-	20.4	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII RS Sprint	041 D	£102,003	4/1997	320/6500	321/6200	1260kg	258	4.4	-	150	-	-	+ Ruthlessly focused road weapon - For the truly committed	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI RS Sprint	011 F	£99,000	4/1997	330/6500	323/3000	1255kg	267	4.5	11.8	145	-	-	+ Lighter, keener, quicker than regular Evo - A little uncompromising	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI Makinen Ed.	128 F	£100,001	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	150	-	-	+ Still one of our favourite Evos. Exclusive, too - Import only	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Diesel	161 D	£162,134	6/2997	241/3800	406/1750	1880kg	134	6.7	-	150	172	44.8	+ Impressive economy from sensible Panamera - Not really quick enough, though	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera S	165 R	£78,221	8/4806	394/6500	369/3500	1770kg	226	5.6	-	177	293	22.6	+ Great cabin and typically fine Porsche chassis - Only a mother could love its looks	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera GTS	168 D	£90,409	8/4806	430/6700	383/3500	1920kg	228	4.4	-	179	251	26.4	+ Sharper chassis, more urgent and vocal V8 - A BMW M5 is E17K less...	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 R	£103,807	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	3.6	8.9	188	270	24.6	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	£122,623	8/4806	542/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.7	-	190	270	24.6	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	144 D	£85,896	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	2170kg	231	4.7	-	173	270	24.6	+ Greener, faster, better - Odd rear styling, numb steering	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo	104 F	£106,100	8/4806	494/6000	516/2250	2355kg	213	4.7	11.4	171	-	19.0	+ Appears to defy physics - Still cracks mirrors at 50 paces	★★★★★
Range Rover Evoque S4	160 D	£99,995	4/1999	257/6500	251/1900	1670kg	144	7.0	-	135	199	-	+ Striking looks, sporting dynamics - Hefty price, and petrol version is auto-only	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport V8 S'chgd	135 D	£67,295	8/5000	503/6000	461/2000	2590kg	200	5.9	-	140	348	19.0	+ Thumpingly fast and hugely comfortable - It's no Cayenne in the corners	★★★★★
Range Rover V8 Supercharged	134 D	£85,895	8/5000	503/6000	461/2000	2710kg	189	5.9	-	140	348	19.0	+ Fast, comfortable, luxurious - Big, heavy, thirsty	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Ghost	140 D	£200,500	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2435kg	235	4.7	-	155	317	20.8	+ More sporting, more affordable Rolls-Royce - But it still costs £200,500	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 F	£285,200	12/6749	453/5350	531/5500	2550kg	181	5.7	-	149	377	18.0	+ Rolls reinvented for the 21st Century - The roads are barely big enough	★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	£32,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	158	243	26.9	+ The fast Subaru saloon is back - Blue paint and gold wheels aren't	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX STI S205*	167 D	£45,000	4/1994	316/6400	318/3200	1470kg	218	4.5	-	155	-	-	+ The best current Impreza - Japan only, and it's sold out there...	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX GB270	109 D	£107,000	4/2457	265/5700	310/3000	1410kg	192	5.2	-	143	-	-	+ Fitting final fling for 'classic' Impreza - End of an era	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI	090 R	£105,007	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	158	-	25.9	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI Spec C*	084 D	£105,007	4/1994	320/6730	311/3500	1350kg	240	4.3	-	157	-	-	+ Lighter, faster, fiercer - The need for self-restraint	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 F	£107,000	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	155	-	-	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some?	★★★★★
Subaru Imp'ja WRX STI PPP	073 F	£103,005	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	5.2	12.9	148	-	-	+ A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet	★★★★★
Subaru STI Type RA Spec C*	067 F	£103,005	4/1994	335/7000	280/3750	1380kg	247	4.3	11.1	160	-	-	+ Best Impreza since the PI - Lost its throbby flat-four voice	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRI	067 R	£104,005	4/1994	316/5800	310/4000	1470kg	218	5.3	13.1	155	-	-	+ Most powerful official UK Impreza until RB320 - Spec C is better	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza Turbo	011 F	£98,000	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177	5.4	14.6	144	-	27.2	+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza PI	067 F	£100,001	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	4.9	13.3	150	-	25.0	+ Ultimate old-school Impreza - Prices reflect this	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RBS (PPP)	011 F	£99,000	4/1994	237/6000	258/3500	1235kg	195	5.0	14.1	143	-	-	+ Perfect blend of poise and power - Limited numbers	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza 22B	011 F	£98,999	4/2212	276/6000	265/3200	1270kg	220	5.0	13.1	150	-	-	+ On paper, the ultimate - On the road, too uncompromising	★★★★★
Subaru Forester STI*	087 F	£105,008	4/2457	320/5800	330/3500	-	-	4.8	-	150	-	-	+ Undercover fun, gutsy engine - Lacks ultimate edge of an Impreza	★★★★★
Vauxhall Insignia VXR	163 F	£33,480	6/2792	321/5250	321/5250	1810kg	180	5.6	-	155	249	26.6	+ Highly able and very likeable - It's a £32K Vauxhall...	★★★★★
Vauxhall Vectra VXR	102 D	£106,009	6/2792	276/5500	262/1800	1580kg	177	6.1	-	161	-	27.4	+ Great engine, effortless pace, good value - Numb steering, lumpy ride	★★★★★
Vauxhall VXR8 GTS	160 F	£49,550	8/6162	425/6000	406/4600	1851kg	236	4.9	-	155	320	20.9	+ Oversteer and character. Available as a pick-up too! - Very nearly M3 saloon money	★★★★★
Vauxhall VXR8 Supercharged	115 R	£107,111	8/5967	533/6000	568/4400	1831kg	296	4.5	-	180	-	-	+ The Lotus Carlton reinvented - Doesn't have polish of best Europeans	★★★★★
Vauxhall VXR8 Bathurst S	148 F	£109,000	8/6162	564/6000	527/4000	1866kg	307	4.6	10.7	155	-	-	+ A tauter VXR8. Bunkers pace, brilliant noise - Gearchange still rubbish	★★★★★
VW Phaeton W12	046 D	£102,111	12/5998	444/6050	413/2750	2240kg	201	6.1	-	155	348	19.5	+ Techno masterpiece that works - Seventy-eight grand for a VW!	★★★★★

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	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
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SPORTS CARS/CONVERTIBLES



OUR CHOICE: Audi R8 Spyder. The Spyder boasts supercar looks, presence and performance, yet you really could drive one every day. And while the V10-engined car makes the more spine-tingling noise, the lighter and even more agile V8 version gets our vote.

BEST OF THE REST: Despite its electric steering, the mk3 Porsche Boxster (right) is just brilliant, while the Mazda MX-5 remains the best choice for budget rear-drive fun. For the ultimate thrills, though, treat yourself to a Caterham R300 or an Ariel Atom.



AC MkVI GT	135 D	£93,500	8/6162	437/4800	431/4800	1000kg	444	3.9	-	162	-	-	+ Cobra charm with a modern twist - It's priced against some strong rivals	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 R	109-11	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	273	4.5	-	181	-	-	+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Good luck trying to buy one	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 245	115 D	£29,954	4/1998	245/8200	155/5200	500kg	498	3.2	-	150	-	33.0	+ The Atom just got a little bit better - Can still be a bit draughty...	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 F	£42,000	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	-	+ It's brilliant - It's mental	★★★★★
Ariel Atom Mugen	165 F	£55,000	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg	499	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten being made	★★★★★
Ariel Atom V8 500	165 F	£146,699	8/3000	475/10,500	284/7750	550kg	877	3.0	5.8	170	-	-	+ An experience unlike anything else on Planet Car - £150K for an Atom	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 2 300 Supercharged	123 R	03-09	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	28.0	+ Makes your face ripple - Like Clarkson's	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 1	015 F	99-03	4/1796	125/5500	122/3000	496kg	256	5.6	18.0	115	-	-	+ Amazing styling, huge fun - As practical as a chocolate teapot	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	130 F	£98,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Lacks real teeth	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage S Roadster	161 R	£110,700	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.6	-	189	299	21.9	+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	£138,150	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1815kg	263	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	+ Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise	★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS Volante	133 D	£190,812	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1810kg	286	4.3	-	191	388	17.3	+ A feelgood car par excellence - It's a bit of a heavyweight	★★★★★
Audi TT S Roadster	122 D	£37,715	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1453kg	187	5.6	-	155	189	34.9	+ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question; not cheap either	★★★★★
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	£47,820	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	155	212	31.0	+ Terrific engine... - Is the best thing about it	★★★★★
Audi TT Roadster (Mk1 225bhp)	016 R	00-06	4/1781	225/5900	206/2200	1395kg	164	6.9	20.0	150	-	30.4	+ Winner on the King's Road - Trails Boxster on the open road	★★★★★
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£45,885	6/2955	328/5500	325/2900	1875kg	178	5.6	-	155	199	33.2	+ Gets the S4's trick supercharged engine - Bordering on dull	★★★★★
Audi RS4 Cabriolet	094 D	06-08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1845kg	228	4.9	-	155	-	-	+ That engine - Wobble wobble, wobble wobble, jelly on a plate	★★★★★
Audi R8 Spyder V8	161 R	£96,595	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	186	337	19.6	+ Dynamically outstanding, sounds terrific - V10 sounds even better	★★★★★
Audi R8 Spyder V10	152 F	£117,710	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1720kg	306	4.1	-	194	349	19.0	+ Looks and sounds sensational - It's the most expensive Audi ever	★★★★★
BAC Mono	165 F	£79,950	4/2300	280/7700	206/6000	540kg	527	2.8	-	170	-	-	+ The most single-minded track car available - That means no passengers...	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GTC V8	168 F	£136,250	8/3933	500/6000	487/7000	2470kg	207	4.9	-	187	254	25.9	+ Still arguably the world's best topless GT - Still no sports car	★★★★★
Bentley Conti Supersports	147 D	£182,100	12/5998	621/6000	590/2000	2395kg	263	3.9	-	202	388	17.3	+ Fast, capable and refined - Coupe does the Supersports thing better	★★★★★
Bentley Conti GTC Speed	131 D	09-11	12/5998	600/6000	590/1750	2485kg	245	4.5	-	200	396	17.0	+ A great convertible just got better - Optional carbon brakes a necessity	★★★★★
Bentley Azure T	140 D	09-11	8/6761	500/4200	738/1800	2695kg	188	5.2	-	179	465	14.5	+ Two-and-a-half-ton sunbed - Cheaper Conti GTC a much better drive	★★★★★
BMW Z4 sDrive 20i (Mk2)	164 D	£29,480	4/1997	181/800	199/1250	1470kg	125	6.8	-	142	159	41.5	+ The Z4 has grown up... - and got fat	★★★★★
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i (Mk2)	130 D	£39,430	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204	5.2	-	155	219	30.1	+ As above, with more power - Not as much fun as it used to be	★★★★★
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	094 D	06-09	6/2996	265/6600	232/2750	1310kg	205	5.7	-	155	-	32.9	+ Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like	★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Roadster	091 R	06-09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1410kg	244	4.8	-	155	-	23.3	+ Exhilarating and characterful, that engine - Stiff suspension	★★★★★
BMW M Roadster	002 F	98-02	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1375kg	240	5.3	-	155	-	25.4	+ Fresh-air M3, that motor, hunky looks - M Coupe drives better	★★★★★
BMW 335i SE Convertible	102 D	£41,710	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1755kg	177	5.8	-	155	205	32.1	+ Looks good, great to drive, fantastic engine - A bit shaky	★★★★★
BMW M3 Convertible (E93)	119 D	£58,785	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1810kg	232	5.3	-	155	297	22.2	+ M DCT transmission, pace, slick roof - Extra weight blunts the edge	★★★★★
BMW M3 Convertible	035 D	01-06	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1655kg	207	5.3	-	155	-	23.3	+ That engine - Gets the wobbles on British B-roads	★★★★★
BMW M6 Convertible	098 D	06-10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1930kg	264	4.8	-	155	352	19.2	+ Composure, grip, power, comfort - Steering lacks feel at low speed	★★★★★
BMW Z8	026 R	00-03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.8	11.1	155	-	14.4	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive	★★★★★
Brooke 260 Double R	094 F	£34,995	4/2261	260/7500	200/6100	550kg	480	3.9	-	155	-	-	+ Fast, dynamic, well built - No roof, looks not for everyone	★★★★★
Caterham 7 Classic	068 F	£16,650	4/1397	105/6000	95/5000	540kg	198	6.5	-	110	-	-	+ The Caterham experience starts here - It's pretty raw	★★★★★
Caterham 7 Roadsport 125	105 F	£21,650	4/1595	125/6100	120/5350	539kg	235	5.9	-	112	-	-	+ New Ford-engined model is just great - Bigger drivers need SV model	★★★★★
Caterham 7 Supersport	165 F	£22,995	4/1595	140/6900	120/5790	520kg	273	4.9	-	120	-	-	+ One of the best Caterhams is less than £20K... - if you build it yourself	★★★★★
Caterham 7 Roadsport SV 175	140 D	£28,850	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	555kg	321	4.8	-	138	-	-	+ The Caterham for everyday use, R300 engine - Losses intensity of R300	★★★★★
Caterham 7 Superlight R300	150 F	£30,000	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg	345	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ Possibly all the Caterham you need - Factory-built cars top £30K	★★★★★
Caterham 7 Superlight R400	105 F	£34,300	4/1999	210/7800	152/5750	525kg	406	3.8	-	140	-	-	+ R400 reborn with (lots of) Ford power - Slightly hesitant low-rev pick-up	★★★★★
Caterham 7 Superlight R500	123 R	£41,000	4/1999	265/8500	171/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver	★★★★★
Caterham CSR 260 Superlight	094 F	£43,800	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	3.8	-	155	-	-	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	★★★★★
Caterham Levante	131 F	£15,000	8/2398	550/10000	300/8500	520kg	1074	4.8	8.2	150	-	-	+ Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly	★★★★★
Caterham 7 R300	068 F	02-06	4/1796	160/7000	130/5000	500kg	325	4.7	-	130	-	-	+ Our 2002 Trackday Car of the Year - Not for wimps	★★★★★
Caterham 7 R400	068 F	03-06	4/1796	200/7500	150/5750	490kg	415	3.9	-	140	-	-	+ Race-car with a number plate - Your missus will leave you	★★★★★
Caterham 7 R500	068 F	99-06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg	510	3.6	8.8	146	-	-	+ Fine for the Nürburgring - Hard work around the Bullring	★★★★★
Caterham 7 R500 Evolution	069 F	04	4/1998	250/8000	190/4000	460kg	552	3.9	8.1	150	-	-	+ Madder than Mad Jack McMad - Er, it's a bit mad	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette C6	083 D	£56,186	8/6162	430/5900	424/4600	1460kg	300	4.3	-	186	316	21.2	+ Corvette performance - Convertible dynamics, electronics	★★★★★
Ferrari California	171 D	£152,086	8/4297	483/7750	372/6000	1705kg	290	3.8	-	193	299	-	+ Revised with sharper performance and dynamics - We'd still take a 458 Spider	★★★★★
Ginetta G20	118 D	99-09	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	191	6.2	-	150	-	28.2	+ Classic looks, old-fashioned value - Vintage driving experience	★★★★★
Honda S2000	126 D	£130,000	4/1997	398/6600	240/7800	740kg	451	2.8	-	155	-	-	+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - The Boxster's better	★★★★★
IFR Aspid	165 F	£71,000	8/5000	380/6500	380/3500	1696kg	227	5.3	-	155	264	25.2	+ Imagine a Caterham crossed with a Zonda - It's a bit pricey	★★★★★
Jaguar XK 5.0	130 F	£84,550	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	4.8	-	155	292	23.0	+ Basic XK gets extra powers... - but loses some of its GT refinement	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	167 F	£103,000	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1800kg	306	4.3	-	186	292	23.0	+ Gains Jag's fantastic new V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S	089 F	06-09	8/4196	294/6000	303/4100	1635kg	183	6.6	-	155	-	25.0	+ Loud and mad, most exciting Jag in years - It's also the most expensive in years	★★★★★
Jaguar XK	089 F	06-09	8/4196	294/6000	303/4100	1635kg	183	6.6	-	155	-	25.0	+ Every bit as good as the XK coupe - 294bhp still only just enough	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	004 F	97-05	8/3996	370/6150	387/3600	1750kg	215	5.4	12.8	155	-	15.6	+ First Jag sports car for years - Overwrought detailing	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	138 F	£49,482	4/1984	237/5500	220/2000	790kg	305	3.8	-	137	-	-	+ Hurricane-in-the-hair motoring - A danger to toupes everywhere	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow	165 F	£64,850	4/1984	295/5500	295/3300	790kg	379	3.6	-	144	-	-	+ Mad looks, real quality feel - Heavier and pricier than we'd hoped	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow R	104 F	£46,000	4/1984	295/5500	295/3300	790kg	379	3.6	-	144	-	-	+ Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper	★★★★★
Light Car Company Rocket	144 D	£29,050	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	876kg	155	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ Single-seater style, speed - Old Formula Fords cost £5K	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 1.6	159 R	£28,450	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ New 1.6 Elise is light and focused - Smaller engine could put some off	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 1.6 Club Racer	068 F	04-11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223	5.6	13.9	150	196	34.4	+ Even lighter, even more focused Elise - A touch pricey for a stripped-out Elise	★★★★★
Lotus Elise R	131 F	08-11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	4.5	11.4	148	199	33.2	+ Most thrilling Elise yet - Blaring engine note	★★★★★
Lotus Elise SC	104 F	06-10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	6.3	18.7	127	-	37.2	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S 1.8	104 F	06-10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	6.3	18.7	127	-	37.2	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	★★★★★

evo PAST MASTER

FERRARI F50 - ISSUE 064, FEBRUARY 2004

The F50 had something to prove in our 'Greatest Ferrari' group test against F40, 288 GTO and Enzo. It didn't disappoint.

'Just about everywhere you look in this simply styled cockpit you see shiny carbonfibre; the stereo and speakers

look like the afterthought they are. The message coming through loud and clear is this is one seriously focused Ferrari.

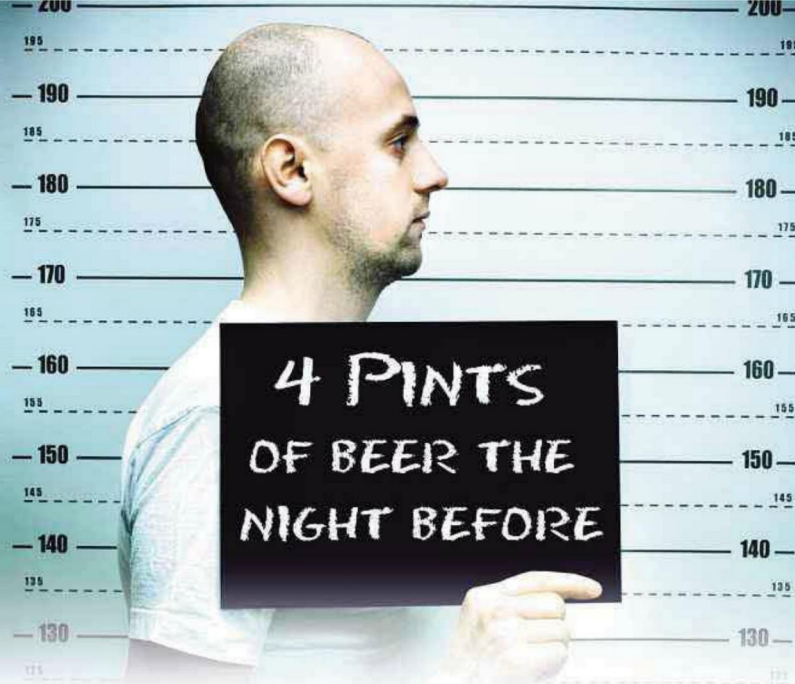
I ease the F50's firm throttle pedal down an inch or so and the car snaps forward, the V12's note deepening and hardening. The engine is an absolute

monster. The gearshift is one of the finest I've ever tried - precise, perfectly weighted and mechanically satisfying as only an open-gate Ferrari shift can be.

There's a real sense of big, big power in a relatively lightweight package... You really can drive it like an Elise.'



Left: F50 was the surprise winner when we tested all four great Ferraris together



If you drank 4 pints between 9pm and midnight, you may not be sober until noon the following day*. That's why almost 1 in 5 drink drive accidents happen the "morning after"**. AlcoSense quickly and accurately shows your blood alcohol level, so you know when you're clear.



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Accurate to $\pm 0.02\%$ BAC at the drink drive limit.
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Intermediate level sensor for good accuracy, blow tubes for improved sample quality.
Clear
Results in seconds. Alerts you when close to or over the drink drive limit.



AlcoSense Elite Only £59.99

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Premium semi-conductor sensor for high accuracy, blow tubes improve sample quality.
Consistent
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Clear & Future Proof
Results in seconds. Alerts you when you are close to or over the limit. Recalibratable for many years of use.

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+ As good to drive as it is to look at
- Lacks the grunt of some rivals

MASERATI GRANCABRIO, ISSUE 142

	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Lotus Elise S2 111S	049 F	'02-'04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	131	-	40.9	+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S2 Sport 135	040 D	'03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	189	5.4	-	129	-	-	+ One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S2 Sport 190	044 F	'03	4/1796	190/7800	128/5000	710kg	272	4.7	12.1	135	-	-	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S1	126 F	'96-'00	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	6.1	18.5	126	-	39.4	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 R	'07-'11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	670kg	382	3.8	-	150	-	-	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 F	'09-'11	4/1796	266/8200	179/7200	670kg	403	3.7	-	155	-	-	+ evo Track Car of the Year 2009 - It's a 76-grand Lotus with no roof	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 F	'07-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.3	-	140	-	-	+ Not far off supercharged car's pace - Pricey once it's made road-legal	★★★★★
Lotus 340R	126 F	'00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	658kg	293	4.5	12.5	126	-	-	+ Hardcore road-racer... that looks like a dune buggy from Mars	★★★★★
Lotus Elan SE	095 F	'89-'95	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	164	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	+ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninvolved	★★★★★
Lotus Elan Sprint	126 F	'71-'73	4/1558	126/6500	113/5500	720kg	178	6.6	-	122	-	-	+ Sensational chassis, properly quick - Affording a mint one	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,250	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	223	5.3	-	176	358	18.3	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio Sport	161 D	£102,615	8/4691	444/7000	376/4750	1980kg	228	5.1	-	177	377	19.5	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i SE	170 R	£17,990	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1153kg	109	9.9	-	121	167	39.8	+ Basic MX-5 offers ESP-less fun - But you'll probably want the 2.0's power	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech	091 F	'05-'09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1153kg	108	9.3	-	122	-	-	+ Handles brilliantly again - Less than macho image	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 R	'98-'05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.6	-	123	-	32.5	+ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5s	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 F	'89-'97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	9.0	-	114	-	-	+ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 16 (Mk1)	131 F	'89-'97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	9.0	-	114	-	-	+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK350 Sport	161 R	£44,725	6/3498	302/6500	273/5500	1465kg	209	5.5	-	155	167	39.8	+ Best non-AMG SLK yet - Still no Boxster-beater	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	171 D	£54,965	8/5461	416/6800	398/4500	1690kg	195	4.5	-	155	195	33.6	+ AMG SLK is quicker and more economical than ever - Should be sharper, though	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	087 F	'05-'09	8/5439	355/5750	376/4000	1575kg	229	4.9	-	155	-	23.5	+ Superb engine, responsive chassis - No manual option, ESP spoils fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG Black	110 F	'07-'08	8/5439	394/5750	383/5750	1495kg	268	4.9	11.2	174	-	-	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted TG-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	£80,000	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1800kg	242	4.6	-	155	212	31.0	+ Wacky performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	171 D	£112,000	8/5461	530/5500	590/2200	1770kg	304	4.3	-	155	231	-	+ Monster performance, lighter than before - Still heavy, steering lacks consistency	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	£106,820	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1970kg	278	4.6	-	155	328	20.0	+ More focused than old SL55 AMG - Lost some of its all-round appeal	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMG	070 F	'02-'07	8/5439	493/6100	516/2650	1955kg	256	4.6	10.2	155	-	-	+ As fast as a Murielago - Not as much fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	071 D	'04-'10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.1	-	155	-	-	+ Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smackingly pricey	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Roadster	167 F	£176,895	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1735kg	330	3.7	-	197	308	21.4	+ Loses none of the coupe's talents - But (understandably) loses the gullwing doors	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works Convertible	130 F	£24,780	4/1598	208/6000	206/1850	1230kg	172	6.9	-	146	169	38.7	+ A manlier Mini cabrio. As hardcore as the hatch... which is still better	★★★★★
Morgan 3 Wheeler	161 R	£30,000	2/1982	115/5300	100/3200	480kg	243	4.5	-	120+	-	-	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Unnatural brake feel, you'd better not be shy	★★★★★
Morgan Plus 8	171 R	£82,500	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1100kg	334	4.4	-	155	-	-	+ Hilanous mix of old looks and new mechanicals - Refinement is definitely old-school	★★★★★
Morgan Aero SuperSports	145 F	£126,900	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.2	-	170	-	-	+ As above, with a V8 and targa top - It's proper supercar money	★★★★★
Morgan Aero 8	105 F	£22,098	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1100kg	334	4.5	-	170	-	25.2	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z Roadster	143 F	£32,050	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1554kg	213	5.5	-	155	262	25.2	+ The Zed's old-school character remains intact - Its purposeful looks don't	★★★★★
Nissan 350Z Roadster		'04-'09	6/3498	309/6600	264/4800	1600kg	196	5.8	-	155	-	24.8	+ Drives just like the coupe - But doesn't look as good	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (Mk3)		£37,589	6/2706	261/6700	206/4500	1310kg	202	5.4	-	163	192	34.5	+ Coes & looks better; cleanest Boxster ever - Steering now electric to help cut CO2	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (Mk3)	169 D	£45,384	6/3436	311/6700	265/4500	1320kg	239	5.0	-	173	206	32.1	+ Boxster steps out of 911's shadow - But gets 911's less appealing new steering	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (Mk2)	140 F	£47,843	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	252	5.0	-	166	221	29.1	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-brolly roof not practical	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (Mk2)		'05-'12	6/2893	252/6400	214/4400	1335kg	192	5.9	-	163	221	30.0	+ Second-gen Boxster's as brilliant as ever - It's a typically Porsche redesign	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (Mk2)	161 R	'05-'12	6/3436	306/6400	265/5500	1355kg	229	5.3	-	170	223	29.7	+ As above, but with more power - Lighter steering than before	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (Mk1)	049 F	'99-'04	6/2687	228/6300	192/4700	1275kg	182	6.3	-	155	-	29.1	+ Still an impeccable sports car - Very little	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (Mk1)	070 F	'99-'04	6/3179	260/6200	228/4700	1320kg	200	5.5	-	164	-	26.9	+ Added power is seductive - As above	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S Cabrio (991)	171 R	£89,740	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1465kg	273	4.6	-	187	229	29.1	+ All-new open 911 drives just like the coupe - Which means the same artificial steering	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS Cabrio (997)	161 R	£85,249	6/3800	402/7300	310/4200	1515kg	270	4.7	-	190	242	27.4	+ The best 911 drop-top you can buy - Lacks glamour of an R8 Spyder	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo Cabrio (997)	139 D	£118,015	6/3800	493/6000	479/1950	1645kg	305	3.8	-	194	275	24.1	+ Absurdly quick and capable drop-top - We'd still take the coupe	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Speedster	152 D	'10	6/3800	402/7300	310/4200	1540kg	265	4.4	-	189	242	27.0	+ Rarity, quality, head-turning styling - More collectors' than drivers' car	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo Cabrio (996)	060 F	'03-'05	6/3596	414/6000	413/4600	1700kg	250	4.7	-	185	-	-	+ Faster than you'll ever need it to be - Just the image thing again	★★★★★
Radical SR3 SL	165 F	£69,850	4/2000	300n/a	340n/a	795kg	383	3.0	-	161	-	-	+ Our 2011 Track Car of the Year, and it's road-legal - You'll need to wrap up warm	★★★★★
Radical SR8LM	138 F	£88,000	8/2800	460/10500	260/8000	680kg	687	3.2	-	168	-	-	+ Fastest car around the Nordschleife - Convincing people it's road legal	★★★★★
Smart Roadster Brabus	067 D	'04-'07	3/668	101/5600	96/2500	895kg	115	9.8	-	121	-	54.3	+ Feisty engine, growly soundtrack - Slow paddleshift gearbox	★★★★★
Tesla Roadster	131 F	£87,945	AC motor	248/4500	273/0-4500	1283kg	196	5.0	14.3	120	-	-	+ If this is the future, it's going to be fun - Limited range, high price	★★★★★
Tonio-R Duratec	102 D	£23,500	4/1999	193/6500	174/4500	550kg	357	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ Very good value, well built, and lots of fun too - No roof, no windscreen	★★★★★
Toyota MR2	078 F	'00-'06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	7.2	21.2	130	-	38.2	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	★★★★★
TVR T350T	067 D	'04-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1100kg	318	4.4	-	175+	-	-	+ Targa top roof, grumpy engine - Lacks polish	★★★★★
TVR Tamora	070 F	'01-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1050kg	338	4.5	-	160	-	-	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	★★★★★
TVR Tuscan Convertible	091 R	'05-'07	6/3996	365/6800	315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	-	8.1	195+	-	+ Spirit of the Griff reborn - Over 195mph? Really?	★★★★★
TVR Chimaera 5.0	007 R	'93-'03	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.6	-	167	-	26.4	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-ripping grunt - Details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 F	'92-'93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1060kg	268	4.8	11.2	148	-	-	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 500	009 R	'93-'01	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.8	11.2	167	-	22.1	+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges	★★★★★
Ultima GTR	017 R	£45,500	8/6300	534/5800	528/4800	990kg	548	3.9	8.2	204	-	-	+ Turns the M1 into the Mulsanne - You'll have to build it yourself	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.6	-	136	-	34.4	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	'03-'05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.7	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	★★★★★
Westfield Megabusa	036 F	£24,450	4/1298	175/9800	102/9000	430kg	413	3.7	-	140	-	-	+ Bike-engined road-rocket - Not big on practicality...	★★★★★
Westfield 1600 Sport Turbo	140 D	£26,500	4/1598	195/5850	170/2000	650kg	305	4.7	-	142	-	-	+ Very quick and composed - Expensive, and a little on the heavy side	★★★★★
Westfield XI	078 D	'04-'10	4/1275	65/6000	72/3000	498kg	132	8.5	-	120	-	-	+ Old-school charm - Old-school power	★★★★★
Westfield XTR4	068 D	'01-'10	4/1781	220/5500	184/5000	542kg	413	3.6	-	160	-	-	+ Mini-Le Mans racer - You wouldn't want to drive it there	★★★★★
Westfield SEIGHT	068 F	'92-'94	8/3900	270/6000	-	622kg	441	4.4	9.4	144	-	-	+ Snarling, fire-breathing V8, ferocious pace - Spits fuel at you	★★★★★
Wiesmann Roadster MF3	077 D	£65,000	6/5246	338/7900	269/4900	1180kg	291	4.9	-	158	-	-	+ Engine, ride, build quality, exclusivity - Ummm... '50s styling?	★★★★★



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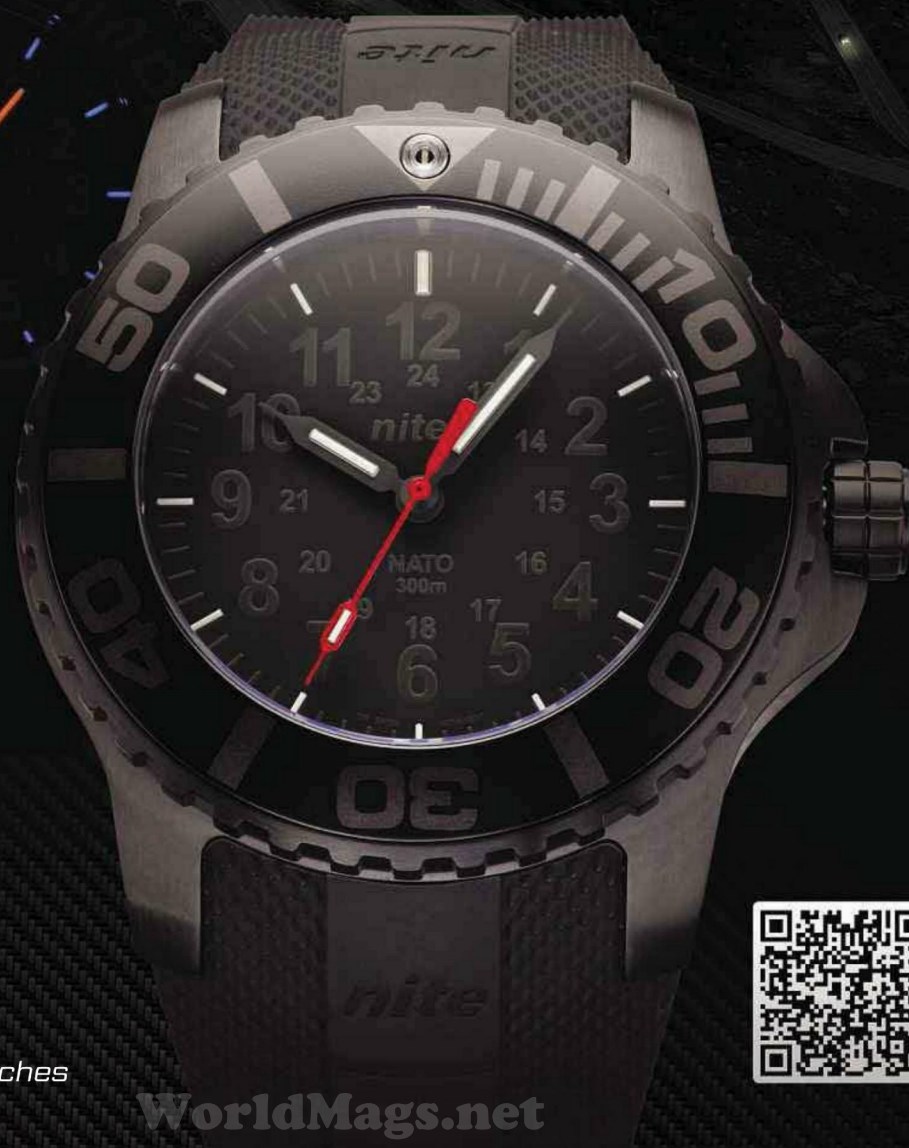
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HONDA INTEGRA TYPE-R (DC2), ISSUE 095

COUPES/GTs



OUR CHOICE: Audi R8 V8. After a long time at the top (and currently lacking a hardcore GT3 variant), the Porsche 911 relinquishes its crown to the Audi R8: a car with more feel through its controls and arguably more desirability as a genuinely useable junior supercar.

BEST OF THE REST: 991-gen 911 (right) isn't far off the pace, replacing rich character with true all-round ability. BMW's 1M Coupe is utterly brilliant, the Nissan GT-R mixes practicality with supercar pace and the new Lotus Exige S V6 is a proper road racer for £50K.



Alfa Romeo Brera 3.2 V6	120 F	'08-'11	6/3195	256/6300	237/4500	1532kg	170	6.9	-	155	260	-	+ Brera made better for UK roads - Steering lacking some feel	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo GTV 3.0 V6	010 F	'96-'06	6/2959	220/6300	199/5000	1406kg	159	6.5	-	150	-	24.1	+ Glorious V6 makes it a mini-Ferrari - So-so chassis	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 F	'07-'09	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.1	-	181	-	-	+ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - They're all sold	★★★★☆
Alpina B3 Biturbo	108 F	'E50/745	6/2979	355/5500	369/3800	1570kg	230	4.8	-	177	-	29.1	+ Alpina's M3 alternative - Too refined for some	★★★★☆
Artega GT	122 F	'E64/860	6/3597	296/6600	258/2400	1100kg	273	4.9	-	170	-	-	+ Stunning looks, chassis up with the best - Interior design, price	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage 4.7	169 D	'E84/995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ 2012 upgrades keep the V8 Vantage on song - Starting to feel a little dated, though	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage N420	147 F	'E96/995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ Aston's best V8 Vantage yet... - Is one of the most expensive	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	168 R	'E102/500	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	299	21.9	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage 4.3	109 F	'05-'08	8/4281	380/7300	302/5000	1630kg	237	5.2	12.0	175	-	-	+ Gorgeous, awesome soundtrack - Can't quite match 911 dynamically	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB9	146 D	'E128/150	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1760kg	271	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	+ Ride & handling transformed for 2010 - Rapide doesn't cost much more	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB7 Vantage	010 R	'00-'05	12/5935	420/6000	400/5000	1770kg	241	4.9	11.2	185	-	18.6	+ DB7 with near-supercar pace - Handling lacks edge	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Virage	156 D	'E149/995	12/5935	490/6500	420/5750	1785kg	279	4.6	-	186	349	18.8	+ DB9 gets DBS's assertiveness - Slightly dated feel, seems heavy	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DBS	142 F	'E180/812	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.2	-	191	388	17.3	+ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey. Can bite the unwary	★★★★☆
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI	155 R	'E27/140	4/1984	208/4300	258/1600	1295kg	163	6.3	15.7	152	154	42.8	+ Front-driver loses nothing to quattro TTs - Steers like a computer game	★★★★☆
Audi TT S	119 D	'E35/605	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1395kg	195	5.4	-	155	184	35.8	+ Usefully quicker TT; great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game	★★★★☆
Audi TT RS	158 R	'E45/840	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	4.4	11.1	155	209	31.4	+ Sublime 5-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it	★★★★☆
Audi TT Sport (Mk1)	081 D	'05-'06	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173	5.7	-	155	-	30.3	+ Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering	★★★★☆
Audi S5	163 D	'E42/790	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1675kg	199	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Supercharged V6 makes S5 cleaner and faster - Pricey once you add options	★★★★☆
Audi RS5	162 R	'E58/725	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1725kg	261	4.3	10.6	155	252	26.2	+ Brilliant engine and accomplished chassis... - ..don't get together	★★★★☆
Audi R8 V8	168 R	'E87/935	8/4163	414/7800	317/4500	1560kg	270	4.1	9.9	187	332	19.9	+ Finally, a true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price	★★★★☆
Audi R8 V10	146 R	'E109/090	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	325	3.9	8.4	196	346	19.0	+ The fabulous R8 gets a supercar engine - Looks a lot like the V8	★★★★☆
Audi R8 GT	169 F	'E142/585	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1520kg	369	3.6	-	199	-	-	+ Everything we love about the R8 - Not as hardcore as we wanted	★★★★☆
Audi Quattro 20V	019 F	'90-'91	5/2226	220/5900	228/1950	1329kg	146	6.2	18.2	143	-	19.1	+ Modern classic - Buy wisely to avoid big bills	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GT V8	167 D	'E122/000	8/8993	500/6000	487/7000	2295kg	221	4.6	-	188	246	27.0	+ A proper driver's Bentley with decent economy - W12 suddenly seems pointless	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	'E135/760	12/5998	567/6000	516/7000	2320kg	248	4.6	-	198	384	17.1	+ 200mph in utter comfort - Weight, thirst	★★★★☆
Bentley Conti Supersports	137 F	'E170/100	12/5998	621/6000	590/2000	2240kg	282	3.7	-	204	388	17.3	+ A thoroughly impressive car... - ..rather than a fun and involving one	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GT Speed	115 F	'07-'11	12/5998	600/6000	553/750	2350kg	259	4.3	-	202	396	17.0	+ Stupendous performance, fine dynamics - Weight, thirst...	★★★★☆
Bentley Brooklands	116 D	'E241/600	8/6167	530/4000	774/5250	2655kg	203	5.0	-	184	465	14.5	+ More fun than it has any right to be - It's a bit thirsty	★★★★☆
BMW 135i M Sport	113 F	'E31/785	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1455kg	211	5.3	-	155	198	33.2	+ Fast, fun, £20K cheaper than an M5 - Not as wild as we'd hoped	★★★★☆
BMW 1-series M Coupe	158 R	'E40/020	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1495kg	228	4.8	-	155	224	-	+ Character, turbo pace and great looks - Could hinder BMW M3 sales...	★★★★☆
BMW 335i M Sport	095 D	'E39/145	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1525kg	201	5.2	12.2	155	196	33.6	+ Eager engine, explicable chassis - Slightly unadventurous styling	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (E92)	162 R	'E54/690	8/9999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.3	10.3	155	290	22.8	+ Fends off all of its talented new rivals - ..except the cheaper 1-series M	★★★★☆
BMW M3 GT (E92)	171 R	'10-'11	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.3	-	193	295	-	+ Highly exclusive, most focused M-car ever - Good luck trying to find one	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (E46)	066 F	'00-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	12.3	155	-	23.7	+ One of the best BMWs ever - Slightly artificial steering feel	★★★★☆
BMW M3 CS (E46)	088 F	'05-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	-	155	-	23.7	+ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car	★★★★☆
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	060 R	'03-'04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	260	5.3	12.0	155	-	-	+ Stripped-down road-race M3 - Standard brakes barely adequate	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (E36)	148 F	'85-'98	6/3201	321/7400	258/3250	1460kg	223	5.4	12.8	157	-	25.7	+ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the original	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (E30)	165 F	'86-'90	4/2302	212/6750	170/4600	1165kg	185	6.7	17.8	147	-	20.3	+ Best M-car ever! Race-car dynamics for the road - LHD only	★★★★☆
BMW 24 M Coupe	097 F	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1420kg	242	5.0	-	155	-	23.3	+ A real driver's car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in	★★★★☆
BMW M Coupe	005 R	'98-'03	6/3246	325/7400	258/3250	1375kg	240	5.1	-	155	-	25.0	+ Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse	★★★★☆
BMW 640i Coupe	160 D	'E59/565	6/2979	316/5800	332/1300	1660kg	194	5.4	-	155	179	36.7	+ New Six boasts improved looks, effortless performance - Not hugely exciting	★★★★☆
BMW 640d	165 D	'E62/080	6/2993	309/4400	465/1500	1790kg	175	5.5	-	155	144	51.4	+ Great engine and economy, excellent build - Numb steering, unsettled B-road ride	★★★★☆
BMW M6	106 R	'05-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1635kg	311	4.8	10.0	155	342	19.8	+ Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMC gearbox now off the pace	★★★★☆
Chevrolet Camaro SS	148 F	'E35/025	8/6162	426/5900	420/4600	1769kg	245	5.1	-	155	329	20.0	+ Looks like a Transformer made real - We'd prefer it in robot mode	★★★★☆
Chevrolet Camaro ZL1*	167 D	'E60/000	8/6162	580/6100	556/3800	1900kg	310	4.0	-	180	-	-	+ The most powerful Camaro yet - UK sales yet to be confirmed...	★★★★☆
Chevrolet Corvette C6	116 D	'E49/033	8/6162	430/5900	424/4600	1461kg	300	4.3	-	186	316	21.2	+ A Corvette with no apologies needed - Still left-hand drive only	★★★★☆
Chevrolet Corvette Z06	099 F	'E66/403	8/7011	505/6300	469/4800	1418kg	363	3.9	8.5	198	350	19.2	+ 85 to 100, brakes, price - Not quite the road-racer we expected	★★★★☆
Dodge Challenger *	122 D	'E40/000	8/6059	425/6200	420/4800	1877kg	230	5.2	-	160	-	-	+ Effortlessly cool... - ..if you live in Hazzard County	★★★★☆
Ford Mustang Boss 302 *	162 R	'E45/000	8/4951	444/7400	390/4500	1647kg	274	4.6	10.5	155	-	-	+ Looks great and has oodles of character - LHD only, far from dynamically perfect	★★★★☆
Ford Shelby GT500 *	140 R	'E47/300	8/5411	540/6000	510/4500	1780kg	308	4.6	-	155	-	-	+ Massive power never fails to entertain - Heavy, unsophisticated chassis	★★★★☆
Ginetta G40 R	165 F	'E29/950	4/1999	175/6700	140/5000	795kg	224	5.8	-	140	-	-	+ A race-complaint sports car for the road - Feels too soft to be a hardcore track toy	★★★★☆
Ginetta G60	165 D	'E68/000	6/3721	310/6500	288/4500	1080kg	292	4.9	-	165	-	-	+ Reborn Farbio GTs boasts great engine and good looks - The ride still needs work	★★★★☆
Honda CR-Z GT	144 F	'E20/820	4/1497	122/6100	128/1500	1198kg	103	9.9	-	124	117	56.5	+ The first hybrid with sporting intent - No match for a good diesel hot hatch	★★★★☆
Honda Integra Type-R (DC2)	095 F	'96-'00	4/1797	187/8000	131/7500	1101kg	173	6.2	17.9	145	-	28.9	+ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some	★★★★☆
Honda Integra Type-R (DC5) *	037 F	'01-'06	4/1998	217/8000	152/7000	1250kg	176	7.1	16.7	140	-	-	+ Sharp looks, massive grip - Lost a little of the DC2's magic	★★★★☆
Honda NSX	043 F	'90-'05	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1410kg	196	5.5	-	168	-	22.8	+ 'The useable supercar' - 270bhp sounds a bit weedy today	★★★★☆
Honda NSX-R *	051 F	'02-'03	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1270kg	221	4.4	-	168	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2002 - Honda never brought it to the UK	★★★★☆

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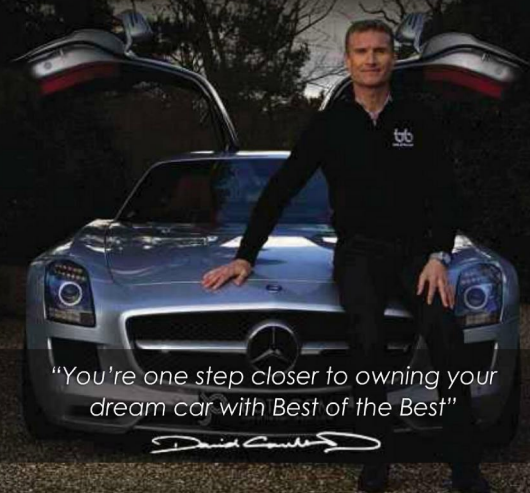
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JAGUAR XKR-S, ISSUE 168

	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	Bhp/rpm	Lb ft/rpm	Weight	Bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Infiniti G37S Coupé	127 R	£38,247	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1706kg	188	5.8	13.8	155	246	26.9	+ Softer 370Z delivers sharp-driving swing at the Germans - Bland looks	★★★★☆
Jaguar XK 5.0	130 D	£65,000	8/5000	380/6500	380/5500	1660kg	232	5.2	-	155	264	25.2	+ Fine car for the likes of us - Jag buyers may not like the harder edge	★★★★☆
Jaguar XKR	168 R	£78,550	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1753kg	292	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home	★★★★☆
Jaguar XKR-S	168 R	£97,000	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1753kg	314	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	+ The most exciting XKR ever - It's nearly £100,000	★★★★☆
Jaguar XKR		'98-'06	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1735kg	234	5.2	-	155	-	22.9	+ Extra grunt of 4.2-litre motor - Lacks feedback	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige S V6	171 R	£50,850	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	4.0	-	170	236	-	+ Exige matures into a breathtaking road-racer - Continuing doubts over Lotus's future	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige S	105 F	'06-'11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.5	-	148	199	33.2	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige Cup 260	139 D	'10-'11	4/1796	256/8000	174/6000	890kg	293	4.0	-	152	199	31.1	+ Feels like a race car, yet works on the road - Pricey for a four-pot Exige	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige (Series 2)	068 R	'04-'08	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	875kg	219	4.9	-	147	-	32.1	+ Highly focused road and track tool - Lacks visual impact of S1	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige (Series 1)	067 D	'00-'01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	136	-	-	+ Looks and goes like Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement	★★★★☆
Lotus Evora	138 F	£52,500	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.6	13.6	162	217	30.3	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 car of the year - Pricey options	★★★★☆
Lotus Evora S	168 R	£61,500	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.6	-	172	229	28.7	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spurs with the Porsche 911L	★★★★☆
Lotus Europa SE	127 F	'08-'10	4/1998	222/5600	221/4000	993kg	227	4.9	-	146	-	28.8	+ More of a Lotus than before - Still overshadowed by the Exige and Evora	★★★★☆
Lotus Europa Sport 350	005 R	'99-'00	8/3506	350/6500	295/4250	1299kg	274	4.3	9.9	175	-	22.0	+ Designed for track work but brilliant on the road - Limited edition	★★★★☆
Maserati GranTurismo	114 R	£82,190	8/4244	399/7100	339/4750	1880kg	216	5.5	12.7	177	330	19.8	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911	★★★★☆
Maserati GranTurismo S	168 R	£92,410	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1890kg	234	4.9	-	183	385	17.2	+ A genuinely sporty Maser - A bit heavier and pricier than we'd like	★★★★☆
Maserati GT MC Stradale	160 R	£110,045	8/4691	444/7100	376/4750	1770kg	255	4.6	-	187	337	19.6	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - No rear seats	★★★★☆
Maserati Coupe	054 F	'03-'07	8/4244	390/7000	333/4500	1680kg	237	4.8	-	177	-	17.6	+ Glorious engine, improved chassis - Overly sharp steering	★★★★☆
Maserati GranSport	073 F	'04-'07	8/4244	400/7000	333/4500	1680kg	239	4.8	-	180	-	-	+ Maser Coupe realises its full potential - Very little	★★★★☆
Mazda RX-8	122 R	'03-'11	2/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	6.5	16.4	146	299	24.6	+ Never mind the quirkiness, it's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	162 R	£57,165	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1730kg	264	4.4	10.3	186	280	23.5	+ Mercedes makes a proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black	171 R	£98,765	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1710kg	303	4.1	-	186	286	-	+ The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy, not as fiery as Black Series cars of old	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG	092 D	'06-'09	8/6208	481/6800	464/5000	1755kg	278	4.6	-	155	-	19.9	+ Power, control, build quality - Lacks ultimate involvement	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black	106 F	'07-'09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	186	-	-	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift, spoils the party	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz CL63 AMG	150 D	£115,660	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2060kg	264	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	+ Presence, pace, monster engine - Stiff ride, stiff competition	★★★★☆
Morgan AeroMax	097 D	£110,000	8/4799	362/6500	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.1	-	170	-	-	+ Weird and utterly wonderful - They're all sold	★★★★☆
Nissan 370Z	170 R	£29,950	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1520kg	218	5.4	-	155	248	26.7	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer	★★★★☆
Nissan 350Z (309bhp)	107 R	'07-'09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205	5.5	13.0	155	-	24.1	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling	★★★★☆
Nissan 350Z (296bhp)	094 F	'06-'07	6/3498	296/6400	260/4800	1525kg	197	5.8	-	155	-	24.8	+ Small power boost adds to Z's appeal - Slightly low-rent interior	★★★★☆
Nissan GT-R (2012MY)	168 R	£74,450	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	2.8	-	199	275	24.0	+ GT-R is quicker and better than ever - But over £20K more than its launch price	★★★★☆
Nissan GT-R Spec V	150 F	£124,950	6/3799	478/6400	447/3500	1680kg	289	3.4	-	193	295	-	+ Phenomenal brakes and handling - Not really worth the extra £50K	★★★★☆
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	152 F	'10-'12	6/3799	523/6400	451/3200	1740kg	305	3.0	-	194	279	23.5	+ More powerful version of the original - But they're not worlds apart to drive	★★★★☆
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	125 F	'08-'10	6/3799	473/6400	434/3200	1740kg	276	3.8	-	193	-	-	+ Our 2008 Car of the Year, now from just £35K - You won't see 20mpg often	★★★★☆
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	009 R	'99-'02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	4.7	12.5	165	-	20.1	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Very firm ride	★★★★☆
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	019 F	'97-'99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	5.4	14.3	155	-	22.0	+ Proof that Jap hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply	★★★★☆
Noble M400	089 F	'04-'06	6/2968	425/6500	390/5000	1060kg	407	3.5	-	185	-	-	+ Devilishly fast - Demon Tweaks interior	★★★★☆
Noble M12 GT0-3R	070 F	'03-'06	6/2968	352/6200	350/3500	1080kg	332	3.8	-	170	-	-	+ The ability to humble exoticas - Flawed driving position	★★★★☆
Noble M12 GT0	023 R	'00-'03	6/2544	310/6000	320/3500	980kg	321	4.1	10.2	165	-	-	+ Gives GT3 drivers a fright - Styling could be more cohesive	★★★★☆
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 R	£23,595	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	7.3	18.1	147	155	42.1	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayman	131 F	£39,162	6/2893	261/7200	221/4400	1330kg	199	5.8	-	165	221	30.1	+ Extra power, just as involving - Still lacks the desirability of other Porsches	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayman S	132 F	£47,604	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1350kg	237	5.2	-	172	223	29.7	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too (even though it's the best Cayman yet)	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayman R	158 R	£51,728	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	4.7	-	175	228	29.1	+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayman S	097 F	'06-'09	6/3387	291/6250	251/4400	1350kg	219	5.3	12.2	171	-	26.6	+ Pure and rewarding - If they'd just move the engine back a bit...	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 Carrera (991)	168 R	£71,449	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1380kg	254	4.7	-	179	212	31.4	+ 911 becomes cleaner and cleverer - But some of its character's gone AWOL	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991)	168 R	£81,242	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1395kg	287	4.4	-	188	224	29.7	+ As above, but with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 Carrera GT5 (997.2)	152 D	£78,571	6/3800	402/7300	310/4200	1420kg	268	4.6	-	190	240	26.6	+ Fitting finale for the 997 generation - Absolutely nothing	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (997.2)		£80,785	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1480kg	261	4.7	-	185	247	26.9	+ Huge grip, power and composure - The Carrera S is £4K cheaper	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	164 F	'11-'12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8	-	193	326	-	+ The ultimate modern 911 - They're all sold	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	138 F	'09-'11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	4.2	9.2	194	303	22.1	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute...	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.2)	152 F	'10-'11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	193	314	-	+ Our 2010 car of the year - Looks and noise are slightly OTT	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	103 R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	298	4.3	9.4	192	-	-	+ Runner-up evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	105 F	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	302	4.2	-	193	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant GT3	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	066 F	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1380kg	272	4.3	9.2	190	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2003 - Looks softer than previous GT3	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1330kg	286	4.2	-	192	190	-	+ Track-biased version of above - Limited supply	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 RS (993)	036 R	'95	6/3746	300/6500	262/5400	1270kg	240	4.7	-	112	172	-	+ Barking engine note, gearchange - Not quite hardcore enough	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	066 F	'99	6/3600	360/7200	273/5000	1350kg	271	4.5	10.3	187	-	21.9	+ Our Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 Carrera (997.2)		'08-'11	6/3614	341/6500	288/4400	1415kg	245	4.9	-	180	225	29.4	+ Faster and greener than the mkl 997 - Lost a little of the 911 magic	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 F	'08-'11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271	4.7	-	188	242	27.4	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	070 F	'04-'08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	10.9	182	-	24.5	+ 'S' is like a junior GT3 - Tech overload?	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (996)	051 F	'02-'05	6/3596	316/6800	273/4250	1470kg	218	5.1	-	174	-	-	+ Second best 996 only to the GT3 - Very little	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 Carrera (996.34)	008 R	'98-'01	6/3387	300/6800	258/4600	1320kg	230	4.6	-	173	-	28.0	+ Beautifully polished 911, now from just £12K - Some like a bit of rough	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 Carrera (993)		'94-'97	6/3600	285/6100	251/5250	1372kg	211	5.2	-	168	-	25.0	+ More character than 996 - Harder work at speed	★★★★☆
Porsche 968 Club Sport	019 F	'93-'95	4/2990	240/6200	225/4100	1335kg	183	6.1	15.7	149	-	-	+ One of the all-time greats - Lots have been driven very hard	★★★★☆
Porsche 928 GT5		'92-'95	8/5396	350/5700	317/4250	1790kg	199	5.2	-	171	-	17.0	+ Big-hearted and beautiful - Be sure to buy a good one	★★★★☆
Renault Alpine A610		'92-'96	6/2975	250/5750	258/2900	1420kg	179	5.4	13.8	160	-	21.0	+ Overlooked, bargain-price French 911. Try one - RS interior	★★★★☆
Subaru BRZ	170 R	£24,995	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1202kg	166	7.5	-	143	159	40.9	+ Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised	★★★★☆
Toyota GT 86	171 D	£24,995	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1240kg	162	7.5	-	140	181	36.2	+ More fun than its cousin (above) - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality	★★★★☆
TVR T350C	057 R	'03-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1100kg	318	4.7	10.0	175	-	-	+ Looks, engine - Unsupportive seats, chassis lacks ultimate polish	★★★★☆
TVR Sagaris	099 D	'05-'07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	185	-	-	+ Looks outrageous - 400bhp feels a touch optimistic	★★★★☆
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 R	'05-'07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	369	4.0	-	185	-	-	+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements'	★★★★☆
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004 R	'98-'04	6/3996	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315	5.0	11.4	160	-	-	+ Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion	★★★★☆
Vauxhall Monaro VXR 6.0	079 D	'05-'07	8/5967	398/6000	391/4400	1677kg	241	5.1	-	180	-	-	+ Improved chassis and steering, 180mph - Looks a bit snooty	★★★★☆
VW Scirocco 2.0 TSI	155 R	£24,705	4/1984	207/5300	207/7100	1373kg	153	6.1	15.8	149	172	38.2	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair	★★★★☆
VW Scirocco R	138 F	£29,745	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1352kg	196	5.8	-	155	189	34.9	+ Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Looks very grown-up, too	★★★★☆
VW Corrado VR6	095 F	'92-'96	6/2861	190/5800	180/4200	1237kg	156	6.2	-	143	-	29.5	+ One of the great all-rounders - A little nose-heavy	★★★★☆
Wesman GT MF5	127 D	£150,000	10/4999	500/7750	383/6100	1380kg	368	3.9	-	193	-	-	+ Striking coupe mated to BMW	

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SUPERCARS



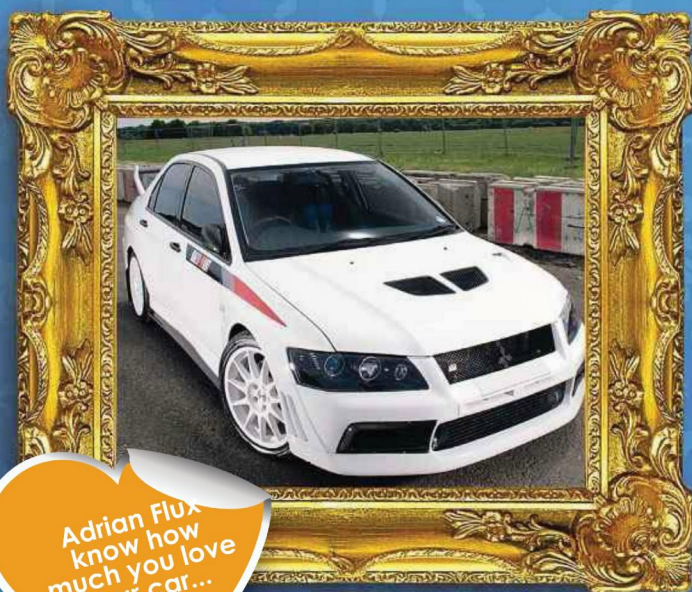
OUR CHOICE: Ferrari 458 Italia. A huge step on from the F430 it replaced. The lack of a manual gearbox is a shame, but the scintillating 4.5-litre V8 and snappy seven-speed twin-clutch transmission result in a car that's markedly quicker than its V8 predecessors.



BEST OF THE REST: A few detail improvements could yet see McLaren's MP4-12C topple the 458. Meanwhile Lambo's Aventador is a suitably outrageous flagship and the Lexus LFA (right) just edges the Ferrari 599 GTO for us, though both are mesmerisingly brilliant.

9ff GT9R	127 D	£540,000	6/4000	1120/7850	774/5970	1346kg	845	2.9	-	260	-	-	+ Above 100mph eats Veyrons for breakfast - Eats M3 dust at traffic lights	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	146 R	£135,000	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.4	9.7	190	388	17.3	+ The best car that Aston Martin makes - Erm, a tad thirsty?	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S	110 F	'05-'07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282	4.9	10.1	200	-	-	+ Vanquish joins supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage s/c	001 R	'93-'00	8/5340	550/6500	550/4000	1988kg	281	4.6	-	186	-	131	+ Two tons of well-hung British beef - Leaden gearbox	★★★★★
BMW M1	110 F	'78-'81	6/3500	277/6500	239/5000	1303kg	216	5.8	-	161	-	-	+ Early supercar icon - A bit under-endowed these days	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 F	£925,000	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1950kg	521	2.8	5.8	253	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport	133 F	£114m	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1990kg	510	2.6	-	253	-	-	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans-roof - Ridiculous brolly/roof thing	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 F	£20.1m	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	268	539	-	+ The world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 F	'91-'95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1566kg	358	3.4	-	212	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out	★★★★★
Caparo T1	138 F	£301,975	8/3499	575/10,500	310/9000	689kg	848	3.8	6.2	205	-	-	+ Absolutely staggering performance - Absolutely staggering price tag	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 R	£106,605	8/1612	638/6500	603/3800	1528kg	424	3.8	7.6	205	355	18.8	+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Italia	159 R	£173,181	8/4499	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384	3.2	6.8	202	307	20.6	+ An astounding achievement, looks fantastic - There'll never be a manual	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Spider	164 D	£198,906	8/4499	562/9000	398/6000	1530kg	373	3.3	-	198	275	23.9	+ A 458 that sounds and feels more organic - Er, 4mph slower?	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	101 R	£212,066	12/5993	611/7600	448/6500	1688kg	368	3.5	7.4	205	415	15.8	+ evo Car of the Year 2005 - Banks are getting harder to rob	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano HGTE	146 R	£221,884	12/5993	611/7600	448/6500	1688kg	368	3.5	7.4	205	415	-	+ As above, with a bit more edge - Can be a little too edgy in the wet	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTO	161 R	£305,676	12/5993	661/8250	457/6500	1605kg	418	3.4	-	208	-	-	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good	★★★★★
Ferrari FF	164 R	£227,077	12/6262	651/8000	504/6000	1890kg	347	3.7	-	208	360	15.4	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion	★★★★★
Ferrari 612 Scaglietti F1	090 R	'04-'11	12/5748	533/7250	434/5250	1840kg	294	4.3	9.8	199	470	13.8	+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above	★★★★★
Ferrari F430	163 F	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1449kg	339	4.0	-	196	-	-	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?	★★★★★
Ferrari F430 Spider	095 F	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1520kg	326	4.1	-	193	-	18.6	+ Berlinetta dynamics, 8000rpm with the roof down - Looks?	★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	121 R	'07-'10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378	3.5	7.7	198	-	15.7	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 F	'99-'04	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	288	4.5	9.0	183	-	17.0	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	068 R	'03-'04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	333	4.1	-	186	-	-	+ Totally exhilarating road-racer. It's loud - It's very, very loud	★★★★★
Ferrari F355 F1 Berlinetta	163 F	'97-'99	8/3496	374/8250	268/6000	1350kg	281	4.7	-	183	-	16.7	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding?	★★★★★
Ferrari 575M 'Fiorano'	169 F	'02-'06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1730kg	298	4.2	9.6	202	-	12.3	+ 'Fiorano pack' makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard	★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	169 F	'97-'02	12/5474	485/7000	415/5000	1716kg	287	4.3	10.0	199	-	12.3	+ Everything - Nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	149 F	'02-'04	12/5988	650/7800	485/5500	1365kg	484	3.5	6.7	217+	-	-	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of Zonda or F1	★★★★★
Ferrari F50	064 F	'96-'97	12/4968	513/8500	347/6500	1229kg	424	3.7	-	202	-	-	+ The best drivers' Ferrari - Lines lack tension	★★★★★
Ferrari F40	157 F	'87-'92	8/2936	478/7000	425/4000	1100kg	441	3.7	-	201	-	-	+ The shape that launched a thousand posters - Er...	★★★★★
Ferrari 288GTO	064 F	'84-'85	8/2855	400/7000	366/3800	1160kg	350	4.9	-	189	-	-	+ Painfully beautiful, rarer than the F40 - You are joking?	★★★★★
Ford GT	087 R	'04-'06	8/5409	550/6500	500/3750	1583kg	353	3.7	-	205	-	-	+ Our 2005 Car of the Year - JC had one. Reckoned it didn't handle...	★★★★★
Gumpert Apollo	110 F	£275,000	8/4163	690/6500	675/4000	1200kg	584	3.0	-	220+	-	-	+ Stupendous performance, 'Apollo' - High price, 'Gumpert'	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ220	157 F	'92-'94	6/3498	542/7200	475/4500	1470kg	375	3.7	-	213	-	-	+ Britain's greatest supercar... - until McLaren built the F1	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCX	094 F	£500,000	8/4700	806/6900	678/5700	1180kg	694	3.9	7.7	241	-	-	+ Sweden's greatest supercar - Sweden's only supercar	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCR Edition	118 F	£151m	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	254+	-	-	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spike power delivery	★★★★★
Koenigsegg Agera R	158 F	£875,000	8/5000	1100/6900	885/4100	1435kg	779	2.8	-	261+	-	-	+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's almost Veyron money	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2	138 F	£166,784	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1380kg	399	3.9	-	199	-	-	+ The mad rear-driven Lambo is back! - For a limited period only...	★★★★★
Lamborghini LP560-4 Spyder	130 F	£162,240	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1550kg	362	4.0	-	201	330	20.0	+ The sound of a V10 with no roof - A smidge less hardcore than the coupe	★★★★★
Lamborghini LP570-4 Sleggera	152 F	£178,560	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1340kg	426	3.5	-	202	325	20.6	+ A reminder of how great the Gallardo is - LP560-4 does as good a job	★★★★★
Lambo LP570-4 Performante	160 F	£186,000	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1485kg	384	3.9	-	201	-	-	+ It's a Superleggera Spyder - ...that's not really super-light	★★★★★
Lambo Aventador LP700-4	164 R	£242,280	12/1698	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg	445	2.8	-	217	398	17.2	+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Erm... expensive?	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo	094 F	'06-'08	10/4961	513/8000	376/4250	1520kg	343	4.3	9.4	196	-	-	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini G'ardo Sleggera	104 F	'07-'08	10/4961	522/8000	376/4250	1420kg	373	3.8	-	196	-	-	+ Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lambo Miago LP670-4 SV	138 F	'09-'11	12/6946	661/8000	487/6500	1565kg	429	3.2	7.3	212	-	-	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	093 F	'06-'11	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1665kg	385	3.3	-	211	-	21.3	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago	089 D	'01-'06	12/6192	570/7500	479/5400	1650kg	351	4.0	-	205	-	-	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo 6.0	019 F	'00-'02	12/5992	550/7100	457/5500	1625kg	343	3.8	-	200+	-	-	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo GT	016 F	'99-'00	12/5992	575/7300	465/5500	1490kg	392	4.1	8.3	211	-	12.5	+ Briefly the world's fastest production car - They made only 80	★★★★★
Lamborghini Countach QV	162 F	'88-'91	12/5167	455/7000	369/5200	1447kg	320	4.9	-	180	-	13.7	+ Still the definitive supercar - Visually, pract-oh hell, who cares?	★★★★★
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	161 R	£352,000	10/4805	552/8700	354/6800	1480kg	379	3.7	-	202	-	-	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match	★★★★★
Maserati MC12	079 R	'04-'05	12/5998	621/7500	481/5500	1445kg	437	3.8	-	205	-	-	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better	★★★★★
McLaren MP4-12C	159 R	£168,500	8/5799	592/7000	442/3900	1434kg	419	3.0	6.4	205	279	24.2	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Flawed gearchange, snatchy brakes	★★★★★
McLaren F1	145 F	'94-'98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1137kg	560	3.2	-	63	240+	-	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black	131 F	'09-'10	12/5980	661/5400	737/2200	1876kg	358	4.0	8.1	199	-	-	+ Bonkers looks, bonkers speed - Bonkers £250K price	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLR AMG	159 R	£168,395	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335	4.1	8.4	197	308	21.4	+ Great engine and chassis (gullwing doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	073 F	'04-'07	8/5439	617/6500	575/3250	1618kg	387	3.7	-	208	-	-	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel	★★★★★
Noble M600	159 R	£200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1250kg	528	3.8	7.7	225	-	-	+ Leicestershire's unbelievably good attack on the supercar class - It's a bit pricey	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda 760RS	170 F	£151m	12/7291	750/6300	575/4500	1210kg	630	3.3	-	217+	-	-	+ The most extreme Zonda ever - The last Zonda ever (probably)	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	147 D	'09-'10	12/7291	669/6200	575/4000	1400kg	485	3.4	-	217+	-	-	+ The best Zonda ever - Doesn't come up in the classifieds often	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda F	082 F	'05-'06	12/7291	602/6150	575/4000	1230kg	497	3.6	-	214	-	-	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Choose interior carefully	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda C12S	096 F	'01-'05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1250kg	451	3.6	-	197	-	-	+ Set a new supercar benchmark - Harry won't let us use his long-termer	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (997.2)	140 R	£110,232	6/3800	493/6000	479/1950	1570kg	319	3.2	7.3	193	272	24.4	+ The Turbo at the very top of its game - The GT3's cheaper...	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo S (997.2)	159 R	£125,865	6/3800	523/6250	516/2100	1570kg	339	2.9	6.8	196	268	24.8	+ As above, with more power - The GT3's even cheaper...	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (997.2)	157 F	£171,468	6/3600	611/6500	516/2250	1370kg	453	3.5	-	205	284	-	+ More powerful than a Carrera GT. Handles, too - Erm...	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (997.1)	094 F	'06-'09	6/3600	472/6000	457/1950	1585kg	303	4.0	8.7	193	-	22.1	+ Monster coming ability - A bit woolly on its standard settings	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (996)	017 F	'00-'06	6/3600	420/6000	413/4600	1540kg	272	4.1	10.0	189	-	21.0	+ The 911 for all seasons - We can't find any reasons	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 (996)	072 F	'04-'06	6/3600	475/5700	457/3500	1420kg	339	4.0	-	198	-	-	+ Later revisions made it even more of a star - Care still required	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (993)	066 F	'95-'98	6/3600	408/5750	398/4500									

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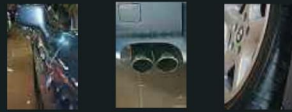
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Richard Attwood & his Peugeot 405 estate

The former F1 driver and Le Mans winner and his 402,000-mile estate that just won't die

I bought this car in 1989 brand new, and it's the last new car I bought. It was for my wife, who'd just started an antiques business and needed something big.

She had it for about 18 months, then decided to leave the trade. If I had sold the Peugeot I'd have suffered a huge loss, so I just carried on running it. And running it... It's done over 400,000 miles now, and still has its original engine, gearbox and clutch, much to the amazement of my MOT man.

It's a 1.6-litre petrol. We didn't exactly need performance. It's fast enough for me – my wife would call me one of the slowest drivers on the road! Working as a Porsche driving consultant I was required to get an Advanced Driving Instructor licence, and one of those makes you feel a bit more responsible – there's a lot of things I used to do on the road that I now don't. The Peugeot could probably do 100mph, but I've never tried it. It's basically an under-stressed car, which is probably why it's lasted so long.

I bought it as a basic car. The only extra was metallic paint, and I'm glad I went with that – it doesn't show the dirt and I can go months without cleaning it. The worst feature is its lack of power steering. It's so heavy during

parking and you can't dry steer it. When you think of all the little cars now that have power steering fitted as standard, this is quite a big car not to have it.

I've done all the work on it myself; I've never had it serviced. I know the car so well I can almost forecast what's going to go wrong. It had never, ever let me down until Christmas last year, when the distributor went. It nearly had that problem after 348,000 miles, when I preempted it and replaced what was its original distributor. So its second one only lasted another 50,000 miles before it broke! Peugeot don't have these bits any more, and we had to search hard – there was one in London and one in Turkey, and you can guess which one we went for. It means the next time it breaks it'll be the end of the car.

Am I attached to it? I am and I'm not. A newer car would be nicer to drive, but it's just an interesting project to see how long it'll last. When it got to 200,000 miles I thought, "Well that's pretty good." Then for some reason or other it got to 300,000... I hadn't planned to keep it and do this stupid mileage, it's just turned out that way.

Everyone knows me and my car. Apparently people see us on the motorway and put

pictures up on Facebook. I'm not in the electronic age so I don't get to see them! There's been plenty of Mickey-taking by other racers, because many of them drive far racier stuff. They probably think it's staid, but as the miles keep going on I've got something to hit back at them with.

I have another car, a 1990s Audi A8 4.2. I was doing work with Audi when it launched and I loved it, and promised myself I'd own one. A few years ago my son got me a computer, opened up the internet and said,

A NEWER CAR WOULD BE NICER TO DRIVE, BUT IT'S JUST AN INTERESTING PROJECT TO SEE HOW LONG IT'LL LAST

"Let's find you an A8." You know what sons are like – he wanted me to have a decent car and not this heap of crap!

I swap between the two cars, using the A8 in the summer, but when there's salt on the roads and bad weather I use the 405. When it finally dies the Audi will become my main car. If the Peugeot can so easily do 20 years I hope the Audi will do 40 – I've been telling everybody I've bought my last car.'



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*Promotion applies to SEAT Ibiza SC 1.4 SE only registered between 1st June and 30th September 2012. Model shown is in Lima green metallic paint with optional 16" Stratos alloy wheels and bi-xenon headlights. Retail customers only. Subject to availability. A £199 initial rental contribution is only payable to customers who purchase their car with personal contract hire. All rentals and charges are quoted inclusive of VAT. A 9.6p per mile excess mileage charge applies if the annual contract mileage of 10,000 miles is exceeded. The quotation is given subject to the vehicle being serviced and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer guidelines. Further charges may be payable when the vehicle is returned. Indemnities may be required. Subject to status. Available to over 18's in the UK from participating dealers only. Excludes the Channel Islands. Personal contract hire provided by SEAT Finance, Freeport SEAT Finance. †Up to 3 years servicing or 30,000 miles, whichever comes sooner. Available to customers who take their car through SEAT Finance. Offer may be varied or withdrawn at any time.